

ASHURA: REVIVING THE ISLAMIC VALUES
Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah
On Page No.:

Pearls OF Wisdom: Allah Allah Bāey Bismillah pidar
Ma'niye zibh-e-azim aamad pisar-
.... *Iqbal*



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> "REMEMBER ME WHEN THE TRUTH BECOMES ALONE, ALONE AND SAD."
> Imam Hussain (A.S.)

RESURRECTING THE SPIRIT OF ISLAM

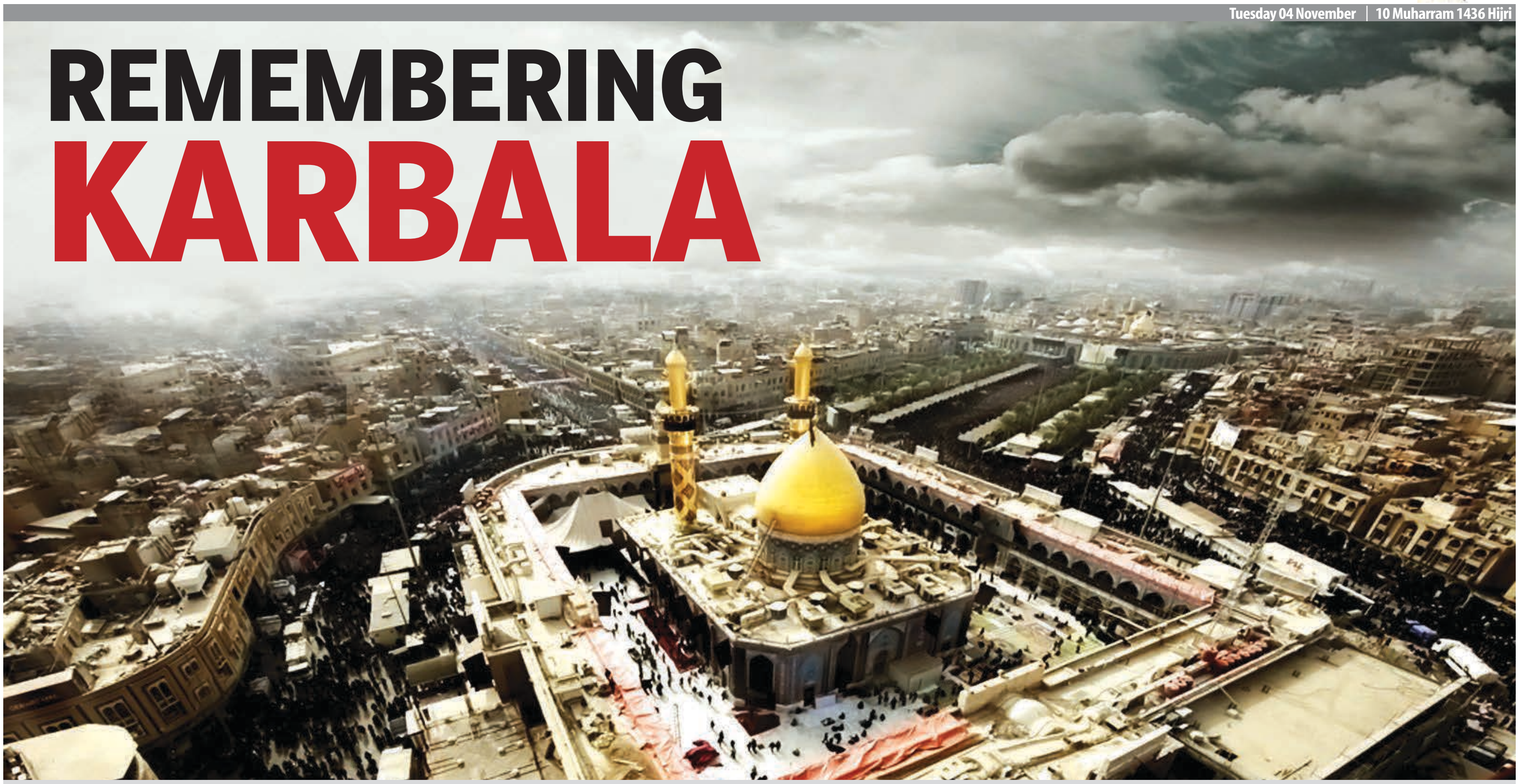
Would it not be more beneficial to discuss the great merits of the Ahl al Bayt (A) as ideal human beings and ideal teachers of mankind, instead of discussing them as metaphysical entities to be revered but not to be obeyed, to be glorified but not to be emulated, to be invoked for assistance in worldly needs and affairs and to be ignored in vital matters of our duties, obligations, and responsibilities as Muslims?



Karbala and the sacrifice offered by Hussain (R.A) and his companions has been the guiding force and a beacon of hope for all the oppressed throughout the ages. It makes it amply clear that despite the numbers, falsehood cannot stand upto truth. It is light that will prevail over darkness, whatsoever the intensity of darkness.

KASHMIR OBSERVER
Tuesday 04 November | 10 Muharram 1436 Hijri

REMEMBERING KARBALA



TARIQ JAMEEL

History serves as a guide to our past. Its study is fascinating as it teaches us about the rise and fall of civilizations, the epic battles and wars that happened in the distant or the recent past. It also serves as a guide to understand the transformation and evolution of human society. It teaches us lessons as well, in how various challenges, be they political, military or social have been handled at various stages of human history. Viewed critically, history can be an excellent guide to understanding and handling current and future challenges faced by human beings.

History is transmitted not only in written form, through proper documentation, but some parts of it are also transmitted to different generations by way of storytelling. In almost every culture, children learn some important stories of their history, early on in their life, through their elders. Among Muslims, the story of Karbala, for example, is learnt at a very early age, when children don't even know the basics of history. This is one way of keeping children attached to their traditions and roots and also help them in imbibing good values. As a child, I remember hearing, from my elders, the story of Karbala-- the story in which Hussain (R.A) was martyred by the army of Yazid. Hussain (R.A) was a symbol of valor and great sacrifice, who, despite all odds, stood for truth, justice, honor and for upholding his principles. Yazid was the villain; the one who grabbed power and sent an army numbering in thousands to fight Hussain, who had gone to Karbala, with no more than 70 odd people, many of them his family members. Yazid's army outnumbered Hussain's men and their ratio was more skewed than between that of the Quraish and the Muslims in the battle of Badr. This story of supreme sacrifice, in the face of huge odds, would run a shiver down one's spine. The heart would ache and inevitably one would form a rough sketch of what happened in the plains of Karbala, with the progeny of the Prophet (PBUH), on the 10th day of Muharram.

In 60 AH/ 680 C.E, Yazid became the King of Muslims. His ascension to the throne marked a clear departure from the earlier practice of electing the Khalifa among Muslims, who would come by mutual consent. The nature of the state changed from that based on broad consultations to absolute monarchy. Imam Hussain (R.A) and other Companions most notably Ibn Zubair (R.A) and Ibn Umar (R.A) showed their strong resentment towards this. Yazid sent urgent orders to the Governor of Madina to force oath of allegiance from Imam Hussain (R.A), Ibn Zubair (R.A) and Ibn Umar (R.A). Yazid clearly knew that he could not be rightfully seen as the leader of the Muslims without the backing of Imam Hussain (R.A). But both Imam Hussain and Ibn Zubair showed no signs of accepting him as the ruler. How could these noble souls accept an oppressor as their leader?

It was just sixty one years after the Muslims migrated from Makkah that Karbala happened. In a way it was the natural consequence of the 360 degree transformation of the Islamic State –one which was earlier representative in form and was based on general consensus to one in which the leadership became a matter of inheritance. In the earlier period, the Khalifa was answerable for his conduct. But with the ascension of Yazeed, absolute obedience, whatever the conduct of the ruler, became the order of the day. No one could now question the ruler and anyone seen doing this would be seen as a direct challenge and threat to authority and hence would be dealt with severely.

It was in this context that Imam Hussain (R.A) undertook his journey, first from Madina to Makkah, which finally culminated in Karbala. He left for Kufa, from Makkah in Dhul Hijja, 60AH. He abandoned the ritualistic Hajj to perform the true essence of Hajj, which is embodied in his abandonment of worldly pleasures and his ultimate sacrifice at Karbala. In a different period, it was Prophet Ibrahim (A.S) with his wife Hagar and their infant son Ismail (A.S), who had made their journey towards the forlorn desert of Makkah. Hussain (R.A) and his family and followers made their journey from Makkah, in the same month of Dhul Hijjah, which is remembered for the patience, sacrifice, trials, tribulations and Hijrah of Ibrahim and his family. Imam Hussain (R.A) embarked on the same journey, where he would be tested, tried and would literally go through fire for the sake of truth, justice and standing up against oppression. In a way the life of Ibrahim and his family and Hussain and his family bear a remarkable similarity. Both undertook Hijrah and were willing to be tested for their convictions and values and offer sacrifice. Ibrahim left his wife and infant son in the desert of Makkah where Hagar beseeched her Lord when her son cried with thirst. God delivered her from her predicament and answered her prayer in the form of a stream of water. Hussain and his family and other companions, on the other hand, were denied water by Yazid's army and they shed their blood which seeped into the soil of Karbala. The tents in Mina are a reminder of the tents in which Hussain (R.A) and his companions spent their days in Karbala before they were martyred on the 10th of Muharram. During Hajj, when pilgrims drink from the well of Zam Zam, they should not only remind themselves of the pain that Hagar felt for her thirsty son, but also that suffered by Hussain (R.A) and his companions in Karbala.

Many of the ritualistic acts of Hajj resonate in the tragedy of Karbala. The symbolic slaughter on Eid ul Adha, on the 10th day of Dhul Hijjah, was in a way, given a new meaning by Hussain and his companions, exactly a month later on the 10th of Muharram in Karbala. Ibrahim (A.S) was spared by God from slaughtering his son Ismail (A.S), but Hussain sacrificed himself and his family members in Karbala. In a way his sacrifice marked the culmination of the sacrifice of Ibrahim and Ismail (A.S). Without understanding the sacrifice of Hussain (R.A) and his family, it is not possible to understand the sacrifice of Ibrahim (A.S) and his family.

The life of Ibrahim (A.S) and his family and that of Hussain (R.A) and his family seem to be intertwined with each other. Despite centuries separating the two, the trajectory of their life bears remarkable resemblance. Ibrahim stood up to Nimrod and his tyranny while Hussain did the same against Yazid. In their Hijrah, in their perseverance, patience and ultimate sacrifice, one can't miss the obvious parallels. Similarly the journey of Hajj and Karbala are also intertwined. Both Karbala and Hajj are about giving up worldly pleasure for the sake of God.

Karbala and the sacrifice offered by Hussain (R.A) and his companions has been the guiding force and a beacon of hope for all the oppressed throughout the ages. It makes it amply clear that despite the numbers, falsehood cannot stand upto truth. It is light that will prevail over darkness, whatsoever the intensity of darkness. His sacrifice appeals not only to the Muslims, but humanity in general. The history of Karbala will always be relevant to the whole humankind, transcending all barriers of race, creed, color and geography. Its message is universal. Given the importance of Karbala, it becomes incumbent upon us that we properly present and analyse this momentous event, in its true spirit. It has had a profound impact on the history of Muslims.

During the last few decades, the events and history of Karbala is subtly being distorted in a way that tries to show Yazid in good light and not put the blame of what happened in Karbala against Imam Hussain (R.A) and his companions, on him. It is also painful to note that rather than condemning and criticizing Yazid, some Muslims have started glorifying and eulogizing him. If that was not abominable enough, honorifics have also been added to his name. History is being distorted and the real story of Karbala is being obfuscated to fit in the narrative of these apologists. Every platform—be it the pulpit of the mosque or the comfortable air conditioned studio of a TV Channel, is being used to spread this vile propaganda. It is not difficult to imagine what mindset is behind this distortion and fabrication of history. It is a deliberate and shameful ploy by the Yazids of our time to corrupt our thinking. This propaganda is being purposely encouraged, funded and spread by the ideological heirs of Yazid to justify their power grab and tyranny, which they have indulged in various parts of the Muslim world. It is unfortunate that many Muslim preachers are becoming willing tools to spread this deceitful, malicious and evil propaganda. We cannot and should not remain oblivious to this distortion and should use every available platform to spread the right message about Karbala and the sacrifice of Hussain (R.A).

The story of Hussain and his family in Karbala, reminds us of the eternal battle between truth and falsehood and good and evil. It gives courage to the oppressed to rise against their oppressors. Karbala is not merely a historical incident which can be treated superficially. It is an institution and a way of life. From a different era, it reminds us of Moses and Pharaoh and Ismail and Nimrod. In the final analysis, the message of Imam Hussain's sacrifice in Karbala is that truth does not need numbers to prevail over falsehood. His message has left an indelible mark and will always remain stamped on people's hearts.

Tariq Jameel, based in Bangalore, is an investment professional with interest in history, politics and sports.

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RESURRECTING THE SPIRIT OF ISLAM



The months of Muharram and Safar offer the yearly opportunity to commemorate the martyrdom of al Husayn ibn `Ali (A), the grandson of the Prophet (S) and the third Imam, at Karbala' on the tenth of Muharram in the year 61. The tragedy and heroism of the event, the resistance and self sacrifice of the martyrs, are remembered during these days by the Shi`ah and the Ahl al Sunnah alike, and by the Shi`ah with a special ardour, fervour and enthusiasm.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the ardour and enthusiasm inspired by the martyrs of Karbala' is something unsurpassed in the history of religions. No individual or group in the history of the world has attracted such sustained admiration and love in the hearts of their followers as the martyrs of Karbala' and in particular the figure of al Husayn ibn `Ali (A), an admiration which has not dwindled in the course of more than thirteen and a half centuries that have elapsed since that event.

Mourning ceremonies are held by Muslims throughout Muharram and Safar, and in gatherings which are called `majalis' (sing. majlis) elegies are recited and sermons are delivered from the minbar, the Islamic pulpit, in which the sufferings undergone by al Imam al Husayn, the members of his household and his companions are narrated. For the Shi'ah sect, the majlis and the sermons delivered therein are the primary source of religious education for the children, the illiterate and even educated adults. However, with the general decline and deterioration in the Muslim Ummah, of which the Shi'ah community is a part, the great educative potential of the majlishas slowly eroded, to the extent that not only the great educative purpose that lies behind mourning for al -Imam al Husayn has been forgotten, the majalis has become a platform for intensification of sectarian animosities and propagation of misconceived beliefs that conflict with the spirit of the Islamic faith. With the general decline of the Islamic culture there has been a parallel deterioration in the educative level of the sermons that are delivered from the minbar. The spreading ignorance and inertia of the majlis audience has laid diminishing demands on the learning and capacity of the religious speakers, called `Zakir' in India and Pakistan and rawzeh khwan in Iran and Iraq. The lamentable ignorance of the masses and the deplorable negligence or absence of the sense of duty on the part of many Zakirs have converted most majalis into mere sources of nourishment of sectarian conceits and delusions. Shi'ism, which implies a voluntary and aware choice to shoulder greater responsibility as member of the Ummah and devoted obedience to the wajib al 'ita'ah (i.e. those whose obedience is obligatory) Imams of the Household of the Prophet (A), its meaning has gradually degenerated into a mere emotional attachment for the Ahl al Bayt (A), devoid of any sense of ethical or social responsibility for the present day condition of Islam and Muslims. Those who declare themselves Shiah of al Husayn ibn `Ali (A), should pause and meditate at the answer given by him to a man who proclaimed to the Imam, "O son of the Prophet, I am one of your Shi'ah." Al Husayn ibn `Ali (A) said to him:

Fear God, and do not make such a claim that God, the Almighty, should say to you, "You lied insolently by making this claim." Indeed our Shi'ah is one whose heart is free from every kind of deception, adulteration, hatred, malice, and corruption. If you are not such then say, "I am one of your admirers and supporters."

"Would it not be more beneficial to discuss the great merits of the Ahl al Bayt (A) as ideal human beings and ideal teachers of mankind, instead of discussing them as metaphysical entities to be revered but not to be obeyed, to be glorified but not to be emulated, to be invoked for assistance in worldly needs and affairs and to be ignored

“While the state provides all support for the annual Amarnath Yatra, which it should—and Kashmiris have always supported and welcomed the Yatra—it has consistently curbed the right to assemble of the local population for Muharram”

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A Breach Of Religious Freedom

SYED ZAFAR MEHDI

We are in Muharram, the month of bereavement and remembrance. In 680 AD, around 1500 years ago, Husain (as)—the beloved grandson of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)—was martyred along with his family and friends in the desert plains of Karbala in Iraq by the armies of tyrant ruler Yazeed. Every year, around this time, massive processions are taken out across the world to pay rich tributes to the 72 martyrs of Karbala.

Reciting soul-stirring elegies and hymns, participants wear black dresses and badges, beating their chests in a spirit of devotion. They carry replicas of Husain's mausoleum in Karbala, and parade the streets. Big banners and hoardings are put up on every street, alley and pathway, mainly in areas where Muslims live. However, in some countries, its appeal cuts across the religious and ideological divide, because Husain's uprising in Karbala was not a religious tussle, a political war or a petty struggle for power. It was a confrontation between right and might, between the forces of truth and falsehood. In many countries, the Muharram commemorations have been effectively used as a psychological weapon and mechanism to mobilize masses against evil, injustice and repression.

Essence of Muharram

Muharram, contrary to the popular perception, is not merely an event or episode in history, revolving around a grief-centric ritual. It is a philosophy, a concept, and a movement, that will always have contemporary significance, in every time and age. The threat of injustice and tyranny will always have contemporary significance. Muslims of the world commonly observe and commemorate Husain's sacrifice each year, remembering his redemptive suffering for the greater good of humankind. Even 1500 years on, these annual commemorations have not lost their significance, but on the contrary have become even more powerful and potent. Mahmoud Ayoub writes in his book Redemptive Suffering in Islam: A Study of the Devotional Aspects of Ashura in Twelver Shi'ism, 'in the ritualistic moment, serial time becomes the bridge connecting primordial time and its special history with the timeless eternity of the future. The eternal fulfillment of time becomes the goal of human time and history."

These annual commemorations help the campaigners of justice and truth re-organise their life around the principles exemplified by Husain, in Karbala. It strengthens their ability and resolve to rise up against autocracy, despotism and treachery. Husain's uprising and sacrifice promote the enjoining of good. It teaches that notwithstanding the exiguousness of power and numbers, if your stand is right, victory will always be yours. Urdu poet Mohammad Ali Jauhar aptly encapsulates it in these words:

Qatl e Husain asl mein marg Yazeed hai,
Islam zinda hota hai har Karbala ke baad
(The murder of Husain is actually the end of [his killer] Yazeed,
Islam is refreshed by the blood of the martyrs of Karbala)

Muharram Processions Across the World

In the next few days, till the tenth of Muharram, which this year falls on November 25, these processions would be carried out in all parts of the world. Biggest processions are taken out in Tehran, Karbala, London, Sydney, New York, Moscow, Toronto, Karachi, Dhaka, Lucknow etc. In U.S., the biggest procession starts from Park Avenue and culminates in front of the Pakistani Consulate. In Toronto, the procession leaves from Queen's Park and ends at High Court entrance. In London, thousands of mourners assemble in Central London Marble Arch Hyde Park and take part in the procession. In Iran, millions participate in Muharram processions in all major cities like Tehran, Masshad and Isfahan. In Trinidad and Tobago, it is popular as 'Hosay' and not even Sunnis and Hindus participate in these processions, but also Afro-Trinidadians. In eastern Saudi Arabian city Qatif, Muharram means lot of activity and palpable buzz. In Nigeria, large processions are taken out in Katsina state in northern Nigeria. In Pakistan, major processions are taken out in Karachi. In India, major processions are carried out in Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Lucknow, and Kargil. “These processions are held across the world to send out a clear message that injustice and tyranny ultimately vanishes and truth and justice prevails,” says Syed Raza, a Kashmiri poet, whose soul-stirring nauhas (elegies) are recited in Muharram processions in Kashmir.

The Ban in Kashmir

In Kashmir, the story is different and grim, and remains unchanged for the last two decades. The government's ban on Muharram processions (Muharram 8 and 10) in Srinagar city is in place since 1990, when the armed rebellion against India gained momentum. Despite the clampdown and curfew-like restrictions imposed by authorities, thousands of young devotees carry out processions and are subjected to brutal police action. They are thrashed, manhandled, cane charged, and some are even sent to custody. Some of the senior Shia leaders are put under house arrest to prevent them from leading these processions.

Religious processions were being taken out in Kashmir since 1527 when Sultan Muhammad Shah was the ruler. Shia Muslims (minority), with help and cooperation of Sunni Muslims (majority), used to take out two major processions, one from Namchbal to Imambara Zadibal and other one from Alamgiri Bazar to Khushalsar. In 1977, at the request of the then Chief Minister Shiekh Muhammad Abdullah, it was decided to take out a joint procession from Abi Guzar to Zadibal. “However,” says Hakeem Imtiyaz Husain, “in 1989, the then governor of J&K imposed a ban on the procession, as part of the sweeping measures to deal with the political unrest. Notwithstanding the repeated pleas by the people of Kashmir, the ban still stands.” Hakeem, retired jurist and writer, is presently working on a book that chronicles the history of Shias in Kashmir.

Legal battle

On Jan 17, 2008, J&K High Court had issued a notice to the state government seeking its objections on a petition filed by Ittihadul Muslimeen, a religio-political outfit representing Shia Muslims of state. But government failed to communicate the ban order to them. The petition sought to quash the ban, calling it a flagrant violation of international law and denial of religious rights. On December 5, 2009, High Court again issued notice to the state government directing it to file objections, but to no avail. “The government informed the court that processionists must seek prior permission from authorities, which we did, but the ban was still not lifted. After four years of legal battle, we finally realized that the whole exercise was futile, because they were never interested in listening to our pleas,” Masroor Abbas Ansari, President, Ittihadul Muslimeen, who had filed the petition, says.

People in Kashmir demand revocation of ban on the grounds that violence has abated and situation has improved considerably. “The ban on Muharram processions, as with the ban on the July 13th procession commemorating the Martyrs of 1931, is simply undemocratic and a denial of the basic rights of Kashmiri people,” says Mirza Waheed, author of critically acclaimed novel The Collaborator, which is set in Kashmir. Waheed says the ban on Muharram processions cannot be viewed in isolation. “You have to see it in the context of the larger structure of repression in Kashmir.”

“There is not much we can do other than protest against it. We fought a legal battle and got a green signal from court but government remains unfazed. Every year, in Muharram, our volunteers hold peaceful protests. I have raised the issue in meetings with Indian government authorities and even at OIC,” says Aga Syed Hasan, separatist leader and President of J&K Anjuman e Shariee Shiaan, a constituent of Hurriyat conference.

Muharram and Amarnath Yatra

“While the state provides all support for the annual Amarnath Yatra, which it should—and Kashmiris have always supported and welcomed the Yatra—it has consistently curbed the right to assemble of the local population,” says Waheed.

Khurram Parvez, Programme Coordinator, Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society, questions the secular credentials of a state that does not allow people the freedom to practice their religion and participate in religious activities: “On one hand, state patronises, organises, partially sponsors Yatra for Hindus of India and on the other hand, it curbs and criminalises the religious programmes of Muslims like Muharram processions, Milad processions etc. Yet the government has the audacity to call itself secular.”

Zafar Meraj, veteran journalist calls it 'blatant discrimination': “Government claims the ban is owing to security reasons but what about similar processions taken out in various parts of Kashmir and some old-city localities? If it can provide security to annual



Amarnath yatra that attracts lakhs of Hindu pilgrims every year, why not Muharram processions that have never been under any kind of threat?”

“The contrast cannot get any starker,” says Waheed. “The state wants to develop infrastructure to facilitate and possibly expand the Amarnath Yatra — at potentially disastrous cost to the environment — and at the same time, it has for nearly 20 years now, not allowed people to take out the historic processions of Muharram and July 13.”

Brutal police action

Each year, police imposes curfew-like restrictions on Muharram 8 and 10 (which fall on November 23 and 25 this year) in parts of Srinagar city, including Lal Chowk, the nerve centre of the summer capital. Iron barricades and spools of concertina wires are put up at almost every entry point to city centre. The cops do not even allow pedestrian movement in Lal chowk, and tough restrictions are enforced in Rajouri Kadal, Gojwara, Nowhatta and some adjoining areas in old city. Senior leaders are put under house arrest to prevent them from leading the processions.

However, despite the clampdown, thousands of mourners defy the police restrictions on Muharram 8 and 10 every year — as they indeed did today —and take out peaceful mourning processions in the main city. Each time, they are intercepted by massive contingents of fully-armed police and paramilitary personnel. The cops lob tear smoke shells, resort to baton charge and brutally manhandle the mourners who participate in these processions. “It is our right and duty to protest against the draconian ban in peaceful manner, but that does not mean it will become a law and order problem, so brute police action is unwarranted,” says Hasan, who yields considerable clout in Kashmir's Shia community.

“It is not merely hypocritical but perverse, given that the state itself, appropriating July 13, 1931, a historic moment of resistance against the tyranny of Dogra rule, commemorates the day with official pomp while keeping the people of Kashmir under virtual siege each year,” says Waheed. “When the state bans Muharram, July 13th, Geelani's public appearances, while making sure Ama-

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Unjustified BAN

Muharram is here. It is a month which reminds the entire humanity of the supreme sacrifice of Imam Hussain (AS) and his family and followers, in Karbala, at the hands of Yazid's army. This is an extremely significant event in the Muslim history. It reminds not only Muslims, but the entire humanity of the constant tussle between the forces of truth and falsehood. It reminds us of the essence of humanity and how, despite the heaviest odds, Hussain and all those who stood in Karbala against tyranny, fought for what was right and never gave in to the evil. It is a complete philosophy which, despite a lapse of 15 centuries, has and will always find relevance in human evolution and in its eternal struggle against the forces of deception and falsehood.

Throughout the world, Muslims, especially Shia Muslims carry out processions this month commemorating the supreme sacrifice of Imam Hussain and his followers. These processions are carried out in most major world cities like London, New York, Karachi, Tehran, Baghdad, Beirut etc. In India, processions are taken out in all major cities like Hyderabad, Lucknow, Bangalore, Bhopal etc. The two major processions are taken out on the 8th and the 10th of Muharram, which fall on 13th and 15th November respectively, this year.

But this freedom to take out processions on these two days continues to be denied to the people in Kashmir. The State Govt on Monday, as it has been doing over 23 years since 1990, decided to impose restrictions on public assembly in scores of areas on November 13 (8th Muharram) and November 15th (Ashura).

The ban on Muharram processions in Kashmir cannot be viewed in isolation. It should be seen in the wider context where the State has come down heavily on the freedoms of people. It has denied various democratic rights to the people of Kashmir and banning the processions during Muharram represent the same denial. The Govt on its part cites reasons like apprehension of group clashes or general security concerns. It would be in place here to mention that the Govt has left no opportunity to dub the growing number of tourist inflow in the recent years as a symbol of peace in Kashmir. It has gone all out to inform the rest of India and the world that things are back to normal in Kashmir. It is also important to note that despite militancy in Kashmir, which was at its peak in the 1990s, the annual Amarnath Yatra was never stopped. All support was provided by the State Govt and its machinery, and rightly so, for the smooth and safe conduct of the Yatra every year. The local Kashmiri Muslims, on their part, have contributed to a great extent, in making the Yatra a success, despite various odds.

By denying the freedom to organize these processions, the State Govt is indulging in blatant discrimination. When the Govt can provide proper security to the Amarnath Yatra, which lasts for more than a month and attracts hundreds of thousands of pilgrims, it should not be difficult to provide security to the Muharram processions on two days, given its far smaller size and geographical footprint. This continued ban not only smacks of hypocrisy on part of the Govt but also arrogance and indifference to the religious sentiments of Kashmiris.

It is high time that the J & K Govt realizes the gravity of the situation and lift it's clampdown on these processions. It cannot make tall claims of normalcy on the one hand and on the other, use the pretext of so called security threats and imagined group clashes to chain a

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HISTORYOFJALOOS-E-ASHURAINSRINAGAR

MIRZA SHARAFAT HUSSAIN BEIGH

Allah gave us touching heart to express our passion for ones that he loves. For past 1400 years devout Muslims have been observing Ashura to remember martyrs of Karbala and the brutal massacre of the noble family of our beloved Prophet (pbuh) hungry and thirsty under the scorching heat in the desert of Karbala.

In Kashmir too Muslims, irrespective of their sectarian affiliations, have been commemorating the days during the month of Moharram eversince Islam arrived here.

Commemoration of these days revive the memories of those noble souls and rejuvenate the spirit of Muslims as the message of Karbala remains as relevant today as it was 1400 years back.

According to famous Muslim revolutionary, Imam Ruhullah Khomeini: "Every Day is Ashura and Every Place Karbala".

This may explain why successive rulers have been trying to curb the events held in memory of the martyrs of Karbala every year. In modern times, while at some places ban is imposed on these functions at many places hidden forces explode bombs and carry out massacres of those who come out to refresh memory of Imam Hussain, the beloved grandson of Prophet of Islam.

In Kashmir too there was ban on remembering the children of Muhammad (pbuh) till 19th century as tyrannical rulers saw these as threat because remembering Hussain means imbibing the spirit of valour and martyrdom, standing against the tyrant, upholding the truth and seeking justice.

Finally on one day in 1931 a noble soul of Kashmir, Agha Syed Hussain Jalali stood up and dared the autocratic ruler of the time to stop the procession marking Ashura.

Till them Muslims would mark the days of Muharram in secrecy during night hours only.

The Jamiat-i-Hamdania, a party comprising of followers of Amir-e-Kabir Mir Syed Ali of Hamdan, joined their Shia brethren in ensuring that the name of Imam Hussain resounds during day time in a Muslim majority region.

Agha Syed Hussain Jalali organized Ashura procession from Namchibal (Khanqah-e-Maula) to Zadibal. "Kahkashees", led the Ashura procession with copies of holy Qur'an on their heads as Hussain had laid his life to keep the Quarnic teachings alive as Iqbal says "Islam Zinda Hota Hai- Har Karbala Key Ba'ad".

The procession also had shabih of Zuljinah (the legendary horse of Imam Hussain) with it to revive the scene of Ashura.

It was during this procession, famous Nauha Khwan, Mirza Mehdi Beigh from Sonwar read "Ye chu zuljanaye Syed-e-Shohda,

Ye Qatal Gah Manz Draw Gatse Kheem Gah".

This nauha is still recited in the zuljanah processions. Mourners were seen drowned in emotions, rubbing soil on their heads while repeating this elegy of Mehdi Beigh

"Halaqaye Shabeer tsate Shumrey layeen karbala;
Dape Shumras Shah Hussain sabr kar te rosiya;
Darwaaz ratith cham wechaan Zainab e kubra;
Su kheem nyeare barmala; lare phyeare murtaza".

A surcharged atmosphere would engulf the procession when elderly would read the nauha.

Soon Agha Sahib of Budgam began leading Asura procession from Zadibal to Imam Bargah Hassan Abad.

Some extremists however continued to play into enemy hands by indulging in attacks on the people who were chanting "Hussain Zindabad", thus wittingly or unwittingly strengthening enemy hands.

After 1931 a political movement was launched in which noted leaders participated and then strengthened the Shia-Sunni relations.

The Shia community is indebted to late Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah also, as he played an active and vital role in improving the relations between the two major Muslim sects of Kashmir. In late seventies he persuaded the two Shia factions to carry out only one Ashura procession on 10th of Muharram each year. Later political/religious parties of Shia Muslims decided to take out central Ashura procession alternatively. Jammu And Kashmir Shia Association, headed by Molvi Iftikhar Hussain Ansari carried out the Ashura procession on one year and Anjuman-e-Sharie Shiayan on the other.

As per the agreement, signed by leading Shia parties under Sheikh sahib's supervision, Ashura procession was allotted to Shia Association and Anjuman-e-Sharie on alternate years while the processions of 7th, 8th and 9th Muharram were allotted to Ittehadul Muslimeen led by Molvi Abbas Ansari.

He continues to lead these processions till date. However the biggest procession on 8th of Muharram was banned by government soon after militancy broke out citing threat to peace. This despite the fact that thousands of Sunni Muslims would join this procession as mark of their respect for the family of Prophet (pbuh) and partly because Molvi Abbas has been champion of Shia-Sunni unity in Kashmir.

While others have reconciled to the ban on Ashura procession, Molvi Abbas Ansari continues to defy ban. He calls on Muslims every year to defy ban and join the procession of 8th Moharram.

In response Shia mourners every year reach Lal Chowk leading to confrontation with local police. Hundreds are beaten and arrested. 8th of Muharram was a glorious procession as people would march from Srinagar's Guru Bazar and then pass through Lal Chowk and then reach Dalgate in the evening.

This procession now turns in to protest every year with Maulana Masroor Abbas Ansari in lead.

Successive governments have, now in effect confined Muharram procession to Shia inhabited areas thus disallowing them to take out the message of Muharram outside the confines of these areas.

This has virtually killed the purpose of taking out the processions and buried the spirit of our great ancestors who took pains and fought for their right to take out these processions through the city. Government is thus guilty of infringing the fundamental right to freedom of religious practice of people so boldly stated in Article 25 of the Indian Constitution.

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SHIAS OF KASHMIR
Socio-Political Dilemmas

BY SAJJAD HAIDER

Come Muharram, the month of mourning, Kashmir's Shia-dominated areas come alive with black banners, and now increasingly, with portraits of religio-political revolutionary leaders from Iran and beyond.

The banners of modern day Shia icons from Iran to Lebanon in Kashmir illustrate how the Shia* resurgence has spilled over borders, into places like Kashmir with small Shia populations with their own troubled history.

This new assertiveness from a community which till recently would observe Taqyah (1), or dissimulation, for fear of being persecuted merely for observing rituals like in Muharram, is demonstrative of the urge of the new generation Shia to assert as a community.

They see in the victory of the Shia in Lebanon, in Iraq, in Iran their own triumph. Relief after 1500 years of subjugation, denial of what they see as their fundamental right to mourn their greatest loss, their heroes in the deserts of Kerbala. The urge to overcome the fear psychosis they have been living with as a community ever since.

An attempt to put up a bold face amidst the shadows of lurking fears.

Driven from one place to another. Minority within a minority. Devoid of heroes in their own midst they look beyond borders. The Shia awakening elsewhere is infusing new vigour, new enthusiasm in the youth in Srinagar, Baramulla, Budgam and even in far flung places like Kargil.

There is a bold statement. 'Big brother' you can cow us down or take us for granted at your own peril!

SHIAS OF KASHMIR: Although there has been no official census on sectarian lines in Kashmir, a conservative estimate puts the Shia population of the whole of erstwhile Kashmir state at around 1.5 million.

A rough estimate puts the Shia population of Indian controlled Jammu and Kashmir state at around one million, 10 percent of the total population.

Shias are a majority in the northern areas of Gilgit-Baltistan currently under Pakistani federal control.

Ninety- eight percent in Baltistan and 60 percent in Gilgit and adjoining areas are Shia even though successive governments in Islamabad have attempted to alter the demographic composition of the region to suit their long term political interests.

In Jammu and Kashmir, the community is chiefly concentrated in Srinagar, central district of Budgam, Baramulla, parts of Bandipur and Ladakh region.

Very few Shia Muslim habitations can be found in southern parts of Kashmir and they virtually do not exist in the Chinab valley where as in other frontier and mountainous belts situated on the approach roads to Kashmir, the community was virtually decimated by the marauding Moghal and Pathan invaders during 16th -18th century.

HISTORICAL GLIMPSE:

History tells us that Moghal governor Mirza Haider Dughlat Kashgari (1540-51-) in order to stem the Kashmiri resistance and to perpetuate his rule brazenly adopted the policy of divide and rule and let loose a reign of terror upon the restive Shia population.

Though the brief period of Shia glory in Kashmir ended after the Mughal treachery that led to the fall of the Chak dynasty, (The last Kashmiri sultanate 1561-1587) the community's aversion to foreign rule ran supreme.

It had been during the mid 16th century when the Moghal power was at its zenith in India, that a few Kashmiri nobles had invited the army from Delhi to get rid of the local Chak rulers.

And when in middle of the 18th century, the Mughal Empire had begun its decline, a few Sunni Muslim Kashmiri nobles invited Ahmed Shah Abdali, the brutal ruler of Afghanistan, to liberate their country. Pathans, like Moghals obliged and over ran Kashmir in 1752. In order to maintain their stranglehold over Kashmir Abdali's satraps not only doubled taxes of their impoverished subjects but persecuted the Shia minority with a fanatical vigour as they, like Moghuls, saw in them a perpetual threat for their stubborn beliefs. Fifty years of Afghan rule were rife with suppression of Shia Muslims.

With Kashgari sowing the seeds of hatred among the Muslim community for political ends Shia's in Kashmir in subsequent years had to pass through the most atrocious period of their history. Plunder, loot and massacres which came to be known as 'Taarajs' virtually devastated the community.

History records 10 such Taarajs also known as 'Taraj-e-Shia' in 1548, 1585, 1635, 1686, 1719, 1741, 1762, 1801, 1830, 1872 during which the Shia habitations were plundered, people slaughtered, libraries burnt and their sacred sites desecrated. (2)

Such was the reign of terror during this period that the community widely went into the practice of Taqya in order to preserve their lives and the honour of their womenfolk. Village after village disappeared, with community members either migrating to safety further north or dissolving in the majority faith.

The community has yet to recover fully from the shocks of these Taarajs, the last one suffered more than a century ago, and the fear of hidden lurking dangers continues to haunt it to date.

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GHETOISATION: The revival of sectarian based politics in Pakistan during mid eighties and dramatic resurgence of anti-Shia forces there reinforced the fears of the community. The fears actually worsened after the outbreak of the armed uprising in Kashmir in the late eighties with some militant groups, actively supported by the Pakistani state and perceived by the community to be influenced by anti-Shia hate propaganda that was tearing Pakistan of their dreams apart, at the fore front.

This perhaps can explain the reluctance of the community to actively throw in their lot with the separatist movement. This was unlike in the past when the community was in the vanguard of the pro-Pakistan movement in Kashmir.

It was because of this fear that during the past two decades Kashmir, particularly Srinagar, saw emergence of Shia enclaves, now increasingly taking the shape of ghettos.

Zadibal, Bagwanpur, Shalimar and Bemina, the Shia dominated areas of the city absorbed a heavy influx of community members from smaller pockets of downtown Srinagar like Kamangarpora, Shamswari, Fateh Kadal, Chinkral Mohalla, Habba Kadal, Rainawari, Khanyar, Nowpura, Khankah-e-Sokhta, Chattabal etc where Shias alongside Sunni Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits, had been living for centuries, creating a composite setting. This relocation, which had brought them temporary security, has spawned complications of its own, with dangers of breakdown of established social order.

And with this the small Shia pockets spread out in predominantly Sunni areas of the city are gradually disappearing.

The persecution suffered by Shias in Kashmir during the successive foreign rules was not new for the community. Many of the standard bearers of Shia'ism, like Sa'adaat or the descendents of the Prophet (pbuh) and other missionaries who played a key role in spread of the faith in Kashmir, had left their home lands forced by similar situations.

IRAN CONNECTION: During the reign of the Umayads and Abbasids (661-1258) the persecution of the Shia was so severe that they continued to migrate from one place to another in search of a peaceful habitat.(3)

Many later-age Sa'adat and other Shia missionaries, either to escape persecution at the hands of rulers of their time or for the purpose of spreading their faith, traveled to distant lands. Kashmir embraced them in her bosom and the valley soon became one of their favourite destinations.

First to arrive was Syed Sharafudin alias Bul Bul Shah from Ardebil followed by Mir Syed Ali from Hamedan.

Shrines of these missionaries, revered by people irrespective of their religious or sectarian allegiance, dot every part of the Kashmir state.

Thus the families who still post-fix their names with the city of their forefathers' origin can be found in abundance across Kashmir.

Hamadani, Semnani, Kashani, Kirmani, Geelani, Mazandarani, Shirazi, Isfahani, Qazvini, Araki they came from all parts of Iran and made Kashmir their home. Interestingly overwhelming majority of those who arrived in Kashmir either for missionary activity or for refuge where from Shia Iran and rarely do we find any missionary of Arab origin buried in Kashmir.

Noted Shia families like Ansari, Safavi, Jalali, Razavi, Hakim all trace their roots to Iran.

They till date hold sway over politico-religious life of the Shia community.

Even artisans, craftsmen, physicians (Hakims) and scholars who accompanied the missionaries or came later on bore the Persian surnames. This is cited as one of the reasons for monopoly over arts trade by the Shia community until recently.

SHIA POLITICS: As the Indian awakening movement began in the early 19th century, Shia nobles like Mir Syed Hussain Shah Jalali were championing the cause of the community at the forums in and outside of the state.

In 1885, he established the Anjuman-e-Imamiya, first politico-religious organization of Shias of Kashmir and subsequently founded the first ever educational institution alongside that of Mirwaiz Rasool Shah, by name of Imamiya High School where students from all sects including Kashmiri Pandits studied.

Jalali, who was a landlord and later was nominated to the legislative assembly by Maharaja Hari Singh, strived tirelessly for the cause of the community and it was due to his efforts that Shias for the first time in 300 years (after the Chak era) took out the Muharram procession during daytime.

Jalali family's influence however waned with the death of Syed Muhammad Jalali, son of Mir Hussain Shah Jalali, who was the first Muslim from Kashmir to be nominated to the upper house of the Indian parliament as a Muslim representative.

Short lived was the influence of Mir's cotemporary in politics Munshi Muhammad Ishaq who rose to prominence in the early stages of the plebiscite movement. He was one of the founding members of the Plebiscite Front.

However two families who have left a profound impact on the community in religio-political and social spheres and continue to do so are the Safavi dynasty of Budgam and the Ansari family of Srinagar. Both had produced some outstanding ulema in the past and since the clergy exerts enormous authority in the Shi'a communities the world over, Kashmir was no exception.

Such was the widespread devotion towards these two families that the Shia community of Kashmir had a vertical split with the community divided between two new groups which came to be known as Firqas or sub-sects.

Those following the Ansari family came to be known as Firqa-e-Qadimi (The older sect) while those following the Safavi family of Budgam are known as Firqa-e-Jadid or the new sect.

For many, this dominance of the two select clans has been the bane of the Shia community in Kashmir, as successive governments have cultivated the top figures in order to suborn the entire community. This has not only perpetuated the influence of the clans but also made it near impossible for a common Shia to make his mark on the political stage.

QADIMIS: Ever since Mulla Aalim Ansari, a scholar of repute and the founder of the Ansari dynasty here, arrived in Kashmir accompanying Mir Syed Hussain Razavi Qumi during the reign of Sultan Zainul Aabidin Budshah (1420-1470) Ansaris have wielded enormous influence over the vast majority of Shias of Kashmir.

Ansari dynasty which has produced outstanding scholars and theologians, most of them alumni of the great seat of Shia learning at Najaf in Iraq faced a major split in 1962 when some influential members of the community chose teenager Moulvi Iftikhar Hussain Ansari as the successor of his father and the then head of the Ansari family, Moulvi Muhammad Jawad, on his death instead of Moulvi Muhammad Abbas Ansari, grandson of his brother the noted theologian Moulvi Fazal Ali Ansari.

Abbas who had said goodbye some six years earlier to Kashmir and settled in Najaf was made to reconsider his decision by a stream of letters urging him to return and lead the community, the invite he later accepted in 1961 albeit reluctantly.(4)

A bitter feud ensued and it continues to dog the community till date.

The Qadimis were split between Abbasis and Iftikharis both sides taking up diametrically opposite sides in the Kashmir politics. Iftikhar was anointed as heir to Maulvi Muhammd Jawad and took over not only the reigns of his party the Shia Association including powerful endowment (Auqaf) that controlled Qadimi Imambargahs and allied assets but whole of the ancestral property. It is widely believed that Bakhshi Ghulam Muhammad, Sheikh Abdullah's bete noire, played a key role in Iftikhar's succession.

Abbas who found himself ditched took shelter in mainstream movement for plebiscite, then led by Sheikh Abdullah, where he quickly rose to a star position thanks to his oratory skills and Najaf background.

This followed the formation of Anjuman-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimin which he aimed as a platform of all Muslims, but the party remained confined within the Shia community despite his strenuous efforts to make it otherwise.

Both parties have ever since remained on the opposing sides in Kashmir politics with Ittehadul Muslimin in the camp advocating Right of Self Determination for Kashmiris and Shia Association toeing a pro-establishment line.

Be it voting in elections or holding of frequent religious services or grand Muharram processions, both parties maintain their separate identity.

Since the Abbas faction had lost Auqaf assets early to Iftikhar, it strived to establish their own institutions.

The Ittehadul Muslimin established a trust by name Al-Abbas Trust in mid-nineties which runs a dozen government recognized English medium schools including one of the level of higher secondary in different impoverished Shia villages.

Safeena, the organ of Ittehadul Muslim remained in print till the mid-seventies, and later resumed publication in 2002 only to close down again in 2007.

The writer of repute Ansari dynasty ever produced preferred seclusion to the lure of dynasty politics. After a brief stint, when he had been chosen as a candidate by the Muslim United Front in 1987, Maulana Mustafa Ansari, till his death in 2006, devoted his time to research and learning leaving behind 31 monumental books, including Urdu and Kashmiri commentary of the Qur'an, thus upholding the family legacy and reviving the dying tradition of scholarship.

The journal Sadaqat, published by the Shia Association, closed down in the early seventies. The Association, however, continues to run scores of Madrasas named Muarif al-Uloom in various Shia dominated villages.

While the Ittehadul Muslimin has a party structure with an elected president and secretary general, hereditary rule still prevails in the Shia Association.

Maulvi Iftikhar remained president of the Shia Association till his death in 2014 and was succeeded by his elder son Imran Raza Ansari.

Both factions run parallel Sharia courts to provide quick justice to their petitioners in the matters of personal law in accordance with the Sharia.

Towards later stage of his life Mollvi Iftikhar had gradually pulled himself away from his clerical duties and would rarely don the religious robes. He was a sitting member of the state Legislative Assembly, and belonged to the opposition Peoples Democratic Party of Mufti Muhammad Sayeed which he joined after quitting NC following formers rise to power.

Abbas who was forced to quit as chairman of the multi party combine, the Hurriyat Conference, after Pakistan backed his rival Syed Ali Geelani in 2004 following his decision to enter into talks with New Delhi on the Kashmir issue, too, is apparently withdrawing from active politics after a long innings of more than 45 years. He remains the only surviving separatist politician of the Sheikh Abdullah era who has stayed away from the lure of election politics.

Yet he became the first separatist leader whose effigy was torched in Kashmir in 2009 for stating that the Hurriyat should stay away from electoral politics, and neither support nor oppose the exercise.

Since his colleagues backtracked on the collective decision following hardliners' pressure, he was marginalized in the multi party forum. Abbas has since nominated his son, Masroor, an alumnus of famous Qum



Rare Sign: Three prominent Shia leaders Agha Syed Hassan al Mosawi and Maulana Muhammad Abbas Ansari with late Maulana Iftikhar Hussain Ansari

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Seminary, as his replacement in the Hurriyat.

JADIDIS: Jadidis or the followers of Agha family of Budgam became the largest of Shia sub sect following the split in the Qadimis.

Aghas, unlike Ansaris are Syeds, a title they flaunt by wearing black turbans. They are the descendants of Mir Shamsudin Araki (1481-1526) a highly revered Sufi saint of Noorbakhshia order who arrived in Kashmir from an Iranian town called Arak and was instrumental in spreading the Shia faith in most parts of Kashmir notably Baltistan.

The patriarch of the Agha family, Agha Syed Yusuf al-Mosavi al Safvi, popularly known as Agha Sahab of Budgam, held the reigns of family firmly in his hands till his death in 1982.

Agha sahab was renowned for his charisma and he enjoyed fanatical following among a section of Shia community. His Sharie Adalat or Sharia Court was popular with even non-Muslims who would take their cases to him for speedy justice.

Following the death of Agha Syed Yusuf, a bitter feud erupted in the Safvi dynasty with his son Agha Fazlulah staking claim on the mantle. The claim was rejected by Yusuf's deputy, cousin and son-in-law, Agha Syed Mustafa, with a majority of followers declaring him as the legitimate leader of the Jadidis. Congress and NC both played key role in the split with the former backing Mustafa faction and National Conference supporting Fazlullah.(5)

Anjuman-e-Sharie Shiayan, the party primarily formed to provide speedy justice based on the principles of Sharia to followers, also got split.

Divided families began running the parallel factions of the Anjuman, and both claim to be its rightful masters.

Further divisions soon surfaced in the party after Agha Mustafa's two sons joined opposite political camps, with elder son Agha Syed Hassan becoming part of separatist conglomerate Hurriyat Conference, and the younger son, Agha Mehdi, jumping in the poll bandwagon on the ticket of Congress party in 1996.

Agha Hassan himself had earlier unsuccessfully contested elections on Janata Party ticket in 1977.

Syed Mehdi contested several Assembly and Lok Sabha election as a Congress nominee and as an Independent candidate but lost every time. He was killed by militants in a landmine blast in November 2000 near Magam town sending the party rank and file in to grief. The then chief minister, Farooq Abdullah, upon his visit to the family to pay condolences, offered the NC membership to Mehdi's teenage son, Ruhullah, now a minister in Omar Abdullah cabinet.

Fazlullah, who himself stayed away from electoral politics, left the job to his younger brother, Mehmood who was minister twice in the National Conference government and later joined the PDP. He quit the party after being denied the election ticket, and is now back in the NC.

Anjuman-e-Sharie weakened after the split, but continues to wield influence among a major section of the community. It runs a number of schools, the major one being the Babul-Ilm at Budgam.

One person who still upholds the intellectual legacy of the dynasty is Agha Syed Baqir. Baqir shuns publicity and confines himself to the spiritual pursuits. He rarely leads traditional services in Imambargahs, even though many of Jadids look to him for guidance in the matters of religion.

SHIA KARGIL: The profound influence the clergy wields over the community is more starkly visible in Shia dominated Kargil, a geographically isolated area , 205 Kms north of Srinagar.

Here clergy continues to shape the destiny of people.

The spectacular rise of the Imam Khomeini Memorial Trust (IKMT), a voluntary organisation comprising mostly youth had created an upheaval of sorts for the socio-political order of the desolate and impoverished district of Kashmir nestled in Himalayas.







Influenced by the Islamic Revolution of Iran, IKMT embarked on an ambitious plan to intervene in the socio- economic life of the people by introducing variety of programmes ranging from water shed management to modern education and even an Islamic bank.

It also became active in the local politics.

2001 census threw up a new reality. Ladakh known as Buddhist land the world over suddenly was transformed into a Muslim majority area with 52 percent population subscribing to Islam. With eighty five percent of Muslims in Kargil adhering to the Shia faith, the community now had a decisive say in the political affairs of the whole of Ladakh region.

The rise of Buddhist movement in Leh and adjoining areas demanding separation from Muslim Kashmir kindled a political awakening in an otherwise docile population of Kargil further strengthening the support base for the IKMT.

IKMT dominated the first Kargil Autonomous Hill Development Council created by the government for running the regions affairs.

The traditional clergy, increasingly marginalised by this new and seemingly revolutionary fervor gripping the local youth, saw it as a challenge to its established hegemony over the community and began opposing it.

Their hold over the populace to steer it in a particular direction, for example at an election time, began to slip and the course of events began increasingly to be determined by the youth influenced by the revolution.

This signified a major divide in the Shia community in Kargil already deeply entrenched over doctrinal matters like on the issue of Taqleed (6). While Imam Khomeini Trust, comprising of Iranian educated young clerics, followed Ayatullah Ruhullah Khomeini on the issue of jurisprudence, 40 year old Islamia School Trust followed Iraq based Ayatollah Abol Kasim al Khoe, Khomeini's contemporary who opposed the concept of Vilayat-e-Faqih, (Rule of Islamic Jurists) as propounded by the latter.

There have been consistent efforts from well meaning people to bring the warring factions together but only with limited success.

The divisions on religio-political basis are exploited to the hilt by interested national and regional political parties, negating the benefits of new demographic realities.

The district's proximity to the Line of Control that divides Kargil from its parent region, Baltistan now in Pakistani control, is another major reason for the regions backwardness.

The population is outnumbered by the military as the district lies on the strategic fault line between India and Pakistan thus mired in political uncertainty.

CONCLUSION:

As it is, the Shia community in Kashmir had been suffering discrimination on innumerable counts including on account of its pro-Pakistan leanings in the post 1947 period.

Any advances made by the community can be attributed to universalizing of state-sponsored education, a less discriminatory recruitment system to government services, and the individual efforts of artisans and craftsmen who have struggled hard for a semblance of economic well-being.

The socio-economic condition of the community can best be gauged by the backwardness and misery in Bemina and around the Dal Lake, predominantly Shia areas in the middle of a bustling growing city.

Though a gradual change is discernable now, the residue of the past, where the community, particularly in the rural areas, bore the brunt of government neglect, is still starkly visible.

FOOTNOTES:

(1) Taqiyah means to hide your real belief for the sake of your safety.

An eminent Shia authority, Ayatollah Hussain Ali Sistani describes the concept of Taqiyah as follows:

a)Taqiyah is done for safety reasons. For example, a person fears that he might be killed or harmed, if he does not observe Taqiyah. In this case, it is obligatory to observe Taqiyah.

b) Reconciliatory Taqiyah. This type of Taqiyah is done when a person intends to reconcile with the other side or when he intends to soften their hearts. This kind of Taqiyah is permissible but not obligatory.

c) Sometimes, Taqiyah may cause a more important obligation to be lost or missed, if so it is forbidden. For example, when I know that silence would cause oppression and infidelity to spread and will make people go astray, in such a situation it is not permissible to be silent and to dissimulate.

d) Sometimes, Taqiyah may lead to the death of an innocent person. If so, it is not permissible. It is therefore haram (forbidden) to kill a human being to save your own life.-- Tarikhush Shi'ah, p.230

According to the Shia scholar Muhammad Husain Jafari, Shi'ism would not have spread if it wasn't for Taqiyah.

(*) In Islam there are five recognized schools of Divine Law: 1) Hanafi; 2) Shafi; 3) Maliki; 4) Hambali and 5) Jafari all named after their Imams.

The first four are called Sunni, and the fifth one is known as Shia.

The first four schools have many major theological differences among themselves as well as with Jafaris.

Jafar-as-Sadiq was the sixth in lineage of Shia Imams and founder of Shia fiqh or Jafari jurisprudence.

Imam Jafar happened to be teacher of Imam Abu Hanifa, founder of the Hanafi school, dominant among the Sunni sects worldwide including in Kashmir.

(2) Hassan Koihami: Tarikh-e-Hassan, Vol 1; Syed Baqir Shah, Subh-e-Taleh (2008)

(3) A careful study of Islam takes us through its blood soaked history. The day noble Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) departed from this world political feuds surfaced in the newly born Islamic state resulting in many fratricidal wars.

The tragic events began unfolding one after other in quick succession, instigators chiefly being the neo-Muslims of Mecca who had embraced the new faith following their defeats in the battle fields and not by its appeal.

When Ali, the trustworthy lieutenant of Prophet was chosen for the post of Caliph in the most anarchic situation following the murder of third caliph Usman he chose to migrate from the Prophets city, Medina, which by now had become a centre of intrigue and conspiracy.

He had kept a low profile eversince the demise of Prophet and despised the pomp of the world and submitted to the will of God. He was Imam for his followers some of them renowned companions of Prophret like Salman al Farsi and Abu Zar Ghafari.

He however accepted the position albeit reluctantly in order to save the fledgling state from extinction.

But Muawiyah, son of Abu Sufyan, a Meccan chieftain, who was posted as governor of Damascus by the third caliph, revolted and refused to accept Ali as Caliph of Muslims.

In 660 CE most heroic chapter in the early history of Islam came to an end when most notable of the Prophets clan, Ali, husband of his beloved daughter, Fatima and father of Hassan and Hussain was murdered inside the mosque of his capital city Kufa while in prayer.

Twenty years later Prophets entire family some as young as 6 months, were butchered in the most gruesome manner in the plains of Kerbala (680 CE) not far from Kufa. Noble women of the Prophets family, including his grand daughter Zainab, were imprisoned, paraded in chains and taken to the Omayad court in Damascus. Damascus was ruled by the son of Muawya, Yazeed (645--683) the architect of the tragedy.

If this was the fate of Prophets kin one can imagine that of their followers who call themselves Shia, during those times.

Shia's never really recuperated since.

Lone male survivor of the Karbala massacre, young and ailing son of Hussain, Zainul Aabideen became the new Imam, fourth in the lineage (680 CE).

It was grandson of Zainul Aabideen, Imam Jafar Sadeq (702-765 C.E.), 6th in the lineage, who founded the Shia fiqh or Jafari Jurisprudence

(4) Moulvi Abbas Ansari: Ayena-e-Haq Numa (1961)

(5) After the Founder-president of Anjuman-e-Sharee Shia'an, Aga Syed Yusuf Al-Moosavi Al-Safavi, passed away in August 1982, the Aga family of Budgam got divided into two factions. The pro-Congress faction installed Aga Syed Yusuf''s deputy, cousin and son-in-law, Aga Syed Mustafa, as the president of Anjuman-e-Sharee Shia'an in presence of then Prime Minister of India Mrs Indira Gandhi. The pro-NC faction broke away and accepted Aga Syed Yusuf's eldest son, Aga Syed Mohammad Fazalullah as the president of the Anjuman. Daily Excelsior, Jammu August 23, 2002

(6) Taqleed means following an acknowledged religious authority, a Mujtahid or Marj'a, in matters of religious laws and commandments. Shias believe Imamate followed Prophethood as Ummah can not be without an Imam at any point of time. So in absence of an Imam as 12th (Imam Mehdi), last in the line of Imam's, went into occultation his successor is the most learned of Marj'a, or Mujtahid. Clergy acts as the representatives of Marj'a in their respective places.

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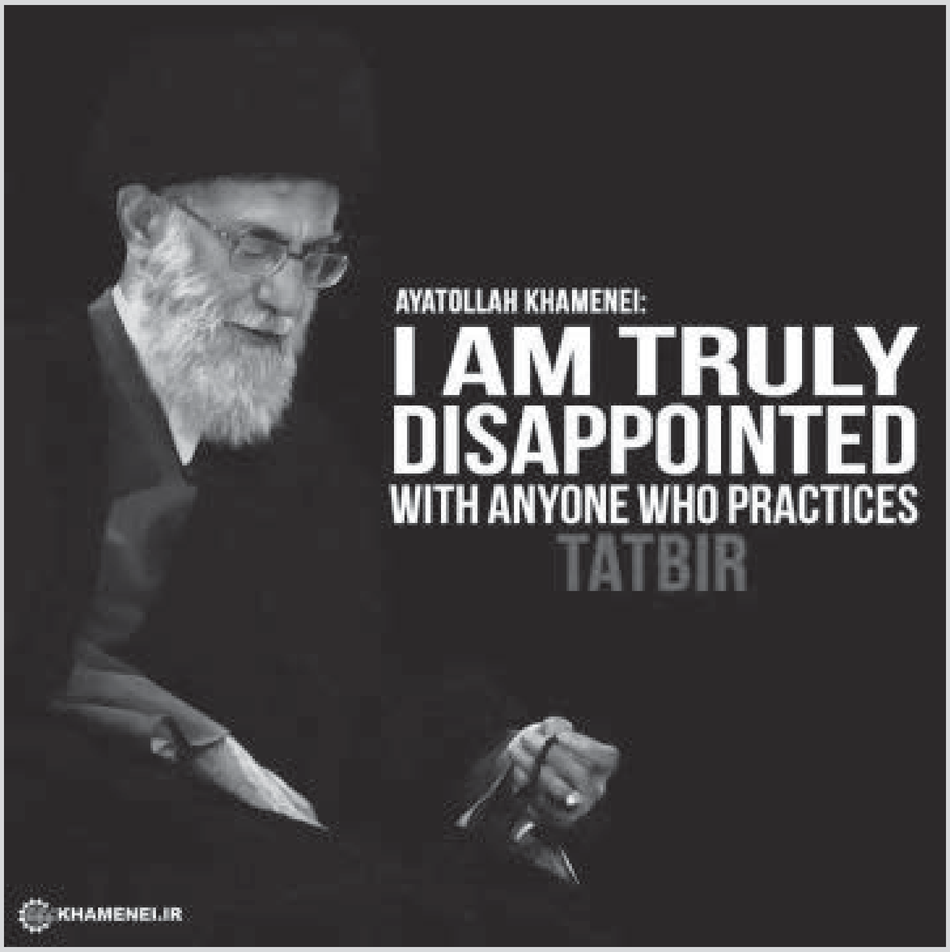
KASHMIR OBSERVER
Tuesday 04 November 2014 | 10th Muharram 1436 Hijri

> In their histories there is certainly a lesson for men of understanding."

ASHURA
Reviving the Islamic Values



BY SAYYID MUHAMMAD HUSAYN FADLALLAH



Is history sacred?

Are we a nation that sanctifies history, memorizes and repeats it, and lives in its caves and grottos, while forgetting the present and killing the future? Are we the remains of this history, who live its battles as though they were ours, and adopt its hatred, and move through its narrow lanes?

Why should we consider history, while we live in the present and look forward for the future?

The Holy Quran mentioned a certain issue when it addressed the sacred history of the prophets, and the non-sacred history of the pharos and the tyrants. This issue is that history is a wave of events that remain in our lives, because these events have contributed to forming the system of life. However, the time during which these events took place did not besiege them, but was a mere framework for these events to occur. After all, time fades away, and the events and causes are those that remain.

There are certain issues that fade away with time, or even before time passes away; they just die in the morning, and we miss them in the evening. Therefore, God wants us to take lessons from the history that survives, through studying the positive and negative elements of the spiritual character or the tyrants: "In their histories there is certainly a lesson for men of understanding." (12:111) The lesson is to study all the cultural dimensions that accompany the circumstances of the issue, and to reach out to the idea which is rich in cultural values. This idea is thus, transformed to innovation which prompts the mind to innovate and the heart to beat lively. Thus, our movement will be rich with values, and the history is no more restricted to historical events, but rather becomes a renewed life.So, when we embrace these lively elements that do not die, they might grant us a life, if we manage to overcome the obstructions that prevent us from opening up to these elements, because sometimes life becomes death and death becomes life itself:

He who dies and rests is not dead
The dead is the one who dies while still alive
The body might still beat with life, but the spirit living inside is dead, and vice versa.

Thus, the history of those who gave mankind life and a spiritual movement, must rest on faith and creed, especially when we open up to the lives of the prophets who ascended above, and lives the essence of the spiritual meanings, and granted love to all mankind, even those who do not believe in them and oppress them. Prophet Muhammad (p.) used to tell those who contested him and his mission: "I gave you good advice, but you do not love those who give good advice" (07:79)

We should consider these humanitarian models that ascended above to the sky, and transformed the world to a sky, whose sun enlightens our lives with spiritual values. As such, we have two suns: one that lights the spaces and objects, and another one that enlightens our minds with reason, fills our hearts with love, and our movement with justice, good, and life.

We always have to live the great spiritual history and forget about the history of the tyrants and those who filled life with miseries and belittled mankind by enslaving it. These have gone with history. As far as our responsibilities are concerned, we are not responsible for history, and should not lock ourselves in it: "This is a people that have passed away; they shall have what they earned and you shall have what you earn, and you shall not be called upon to answer for what they did." (02:134). They created their history; we are responsible for creating ours.

However, our main problem lies in the backwardness we experience.

We see that this person locks himself in this history, while another resorts to another history, at a time when our reality challenges us and those creating the history of arrogance mock and ridicule, while we are digging our own graves by our own hands, even though above the ground, because we refused to reach out to the gardens that nurture our spirits and lives.

The history of Ashura:

We remember Ashura to live the circumstances of this occasion – on which hundreds of years have passed but still beats with spiritual meanings. When we remember the figures of Ashura, we feel that each and every personality is a spirit by itself, one that flies and ascends above and transforms the body to a spiritual beat, joining between the intellect and the emotions and between the matter and the spirit.

Therefore, we look at Ashura based on the spiritual values and the movement whose leaders and faithful masses are open to righteousness, instead of viewing it as a tragedy. It is a movement that has two open eyes looking at the nation and the world, and staring at the Islamic and humanitarian march as a whole. Even when we discuss Ashura in terms of the Imamate, we do not mean to give it a sectarian aspect, but it rather gives it a spiritual framework that is open to mankind and Islam as a whole.

From Ashura, we enrich ourselves with its various dimensions and meanings. Our problem is that we gave Ashura sectarian meanings and locked it in the prison of our creeds and backwardness and customs which lack any cause, because we did not see the cause Al-Hussein (a.s.) represents, but the person who is filled with wounds, the one who experienced thirst and the tragedy of his sons and relatives. We looked at Al-Hussein (a.s.) as the person, not the mission and the cause. So we abandoned the mission and did not find Al-Hussein (a.s.) and we will never find him if he does not represent to us a mission, freedom, glory, dignity and an entity that represents mankind and Islam. This is the real essence of Ashura.But we limited the Karbala (tragic) character to the extent that our tears have become cold. Only those who consider the freedom, resistance, opposition, and challenge shed warm tears when they think of the tragedy.

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The issue of Ashura through the slogans raised by Imam Al-Hussein (a.s.) is a humanitarian issue. Imam Al-Hussein (a.s.) used to look at the human being, go into his inner feelings and concerns about his humanity from those who crush the human character of the people. What did he say when he described the rulers of Bani Umayah? He said: "They took the money of Allah as theirs, and regarded His people as their slaves." He is saying that the public money which organizes the people's lives is the money that belongs to God: "And give them of the wealth of Allah which He has given you." (24:33). This money should be spent in what pleases God, and in order for the people to live in dignity and glory. But this money became the money of the prince and his entourage. In our times, the money of the nation, particularly the oil, has become the money of a certain family and a certain king and sultan and those who kiss the feet of the sultan.

Many of those who talk about the nation and Islam glorify these kings and families. They actually worship the family and its head, and then they talk to you about the belief in one God, and then hold other people as infidels through some jurisprudences, but they worship those who have money: "They took the money of Allah for themselves and enslaved His people."

The contemporary pledge and the historical pledge

During Al-Hurra battle, we saw that Yazid asked his Wali who triumphed over the people of Al-Madina to ask for their pledge in their capacity as slaves for Yazid. They used to enslave the people by the power of money and sword. If we look at history books, we see that when the pledge was obtained for Yazid, a man who has a sword in one hand, and money in the other hand, said: Who gives the pledge to Yazid will get the money, and who doesn't will get this sword. After that, Yazid was the "Commander of the Faithful."

Today, we are witnessing a contemporary kind of the pledge, one that rests on money. For example, people gave their pledge to President George Bush and today they are giving the pledge to the European Union and many Arab figures, for various considerations and ambitions.Imam Al-Hussein (a.s.) wanted to liberate the people who were enslaved by the rulers, and therefore the revolution of Imam Al-Hussein (a.s.) was launched based on this humanitarian aspect in order to achieve freedom for the entire mankind.

The dimensions of Al-Hussein's revolution:

As we read through the narration of Al-Hussein (a.s.), we see that when he went out to the battle to fight those who came to fight him, and when he saw his opponents invading the tents of the women, he addressed them saying: "O You the followers of Abu Sifyan, if you do not follow a religion, and if you do not fear the Judgment day, be free in your lives and return to your origins if you were Arabs."

Imam Al-Hussein (a.s.) raised two issues here. The first is that he laid emphasis to the freedom of man when he said: If you do not abide by religious values and you do not believe in a creed, at least be free. The free man is the one who does not sell himself or his position or opinion in return for money or positions. Do not be slaves, because you are fighting to obey those who enslave you.

The second issue he raised is that Imam (a.s.) tried to provoke in them the feelings of Arabism which Islam approved: "Be Arabs", not in terms of the narrow nationalism, but on the basis of the values the Arabs lived, which Islam adopted some of them and eliminated others. This discourse is not addressed to the followers of Abu Sufyan in particular, but to every human being. On the humanitarian level, we also read his speech when he was asked to give legitimacy to Yazid. He said: "The illegitimate, son of the illegitimate, has settled between two: between unsheathing [the sword] and humiliation, and how impossible is humiliation from us." So it is about being honored in all your life. Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) was quoted as saying upon interpreting the following Quranic verse: "God has the glory and His Prophet and the believers." (63:08) Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "God has allowed the believer to run all his affairs, but he did not authorize him to humiliate himself." Glory is based on power: "The power is wholly Allah's". (02:165). So, to be honorable is to be strong and defending you humanity and freedom.

Then he said: "Do not you see that no one abides by the right and everyone embarks on the wrong?" He is talking about the righteousness which people should abide by, and righteousness is the concept that exists in all the issues of human beings, which ascend his position at the individual, political and social levels.

Therefore, we have to present Ashura to the entire world in its humanitarian aspect, rather than restricting it to a sectarian aspect because Imam Al-Hussein (a.s.) is the imam of all Muslims and he obtained his Imamate from Prophet Muhammad (p.) with whom Al-Hussein (a.s.) lived his early childhood. He also lived with his mother, Sayyeda Az-Zahra and his father Ali (a.s.). So, he enjoyed all the elements and characters of spiritual faith these figures enjoyed. Prophet Muhammad (p.) said: "Hussein is from me, and I am from Hussein", which reveals the spiritual integration between the Prophet (p.) and Al-Hussein (a.s.).

The values of reform in the revolution of Al-Hussein (a.s.):

Imam Al-Hussein (a.s.) said: "I revolted neither for wickedness nor for fame. Verily I rose only to seek for reform in the nation of my grandfather; the messenger of Allah." He did not speak about a certain family or region, but about the entire nation, because he was shouldering the responsibility of the whole nation through his Imamate. "I want to enjoin good and forbid wrong and evil", he said. So, he noticed the deviant situation of the nation, because the rule prevailing at that time damaged the humanitarian aspect of the people who used to love Imam Al-Hussein (a.s.) and his family, but at the same time, they were fighting to earn money or obtain a certain position in the authority, such as Omar Bin Sa'ad

Imam Al-Hussein (a.s.) wanted to integrate reform into the nation, with all its individuals and diversity. He said: "Whoever accepts me by accepting the truth, surely God rewards him for supporting the truth. And whoever rejects me, I will be patient until God judges between me and these people justly. Surely, His Almighty is the Best Judge of the judges." It is reported that the first statement Imam Al-Hussein (a.s.) gave when he went out of Mecca was: "O' people, the Messenger of God said: Whoever sees an aggressive tyrant legalizes the forbidden acts of God, breaches divine laws, opposes the tradition of the Prophet, oppresses the worshippers of God, but does not concede his opposition to God in word or in deed, surely Allah will place him with this tyrant." It is our religious duty to topple an unjust regime, and God shall punish anyone who abstains from fulfilling this duty and reward he who does. Imam Al-Hussein (a.s.) adds: "Those have obeyed Satan…" So, Imam Al-Hussein (a.s.) wanted to change the reality, laying emphasis to two points:

First: the sovereignty of the law, after they stopped applying the punishment system put forward by Islam; a punishment system that must be applied under an Islamic state.

Second: Releasing the money of the nation from their hands, after they have monopolized it, because the money of the nation of that of Allah.

Therefore, we are not allowed to give Ashura a sectarian aspect and regard it as a Shiite issue. Ashura is an Islamic occasion and the slogans raised by Imam Al-Hussein (a.s.) are all Islamic and humanitarian ones. Imam Al-Hussein (a.s.) was also loved by the Muslims and he used to love them all. Everyone used to repeat: "

Al-Hasan (a.s.) and Al-Hussein (a.s.) are the masters of the youth of Heaven."

Ashura is an occasion that rests on the Islamic and humanitarian values that characterized the personality of Imam Al-Hussein (a.s.). These values embodied the leader and the leader embodied the values. So, if you see Imam Al-Hussein (a.s.), you see Islam in itself and if you study Islam, you will come across Al-Hussein (a.s.), without feeling any kind of duality, because Al-Hussein (a.s.) integrated in Islam and Islam lived in his mind, heart and movement. Even in his Jihad, Imam Al-Hussein (a.s.) was a martyr for the sake of Islam.Therefore, we should not separate between the person and the cause; because many people, particularly those who carry out certain backward customs, such as those who practice the bloodletting ritual, do not realize the meaning and significance of Ashura and Karbala, nor do they understand the reality of the Islamic state, in terms of the threats of the tyrants and arrogant powers, or the Zionist movement among others. This is how we should approach Ashura; we should look at the problems and threats overshadowing the Islamic world, because the Islamic world should not remain at the sidelines of the arrogant world.

Though as Muslims we represent 1.5 billion of the world's population, we are still living at the sidelines of the world's decisions. We do not have the right to participate in any of these decisions. How powerful Britain is to interfere in our decisions and fate? How powerful are other countries? This is because we lost the sense of direction, represented by the civilized and tolerant Islam, which is open to the issues of freedom, justice and human rights. Every year, we come up with a new backward ritual, which does not represent Islam or Al-Hussein (a.s.).

We should stay with Al-Hussein (a.s.); the cause and the mission and the power, and we should empower ourselves against the multiple challenges engulfing our lives, namely those posed by the West, which justifies Israel's carnages and considers its killing of the children, women and elderly, and the destruction of the infrastructure in Lebanon and Palestine as self-defense. Therefore, we have to examine the reality of the American and world arrogance.



How do we evoke Ashura?

In light of the above mentioned, the nation should take lessons on the occasion of Ashura, namely how to render our grief a source of power, not weakness, and how to cry out of our allegiance to Al-Hussein (a.s.), not frustration, and how to consider Ashura a movement to empower ourselves, not a mere occasion for grief and tears. Al-Hussein (a.s.) represents the Islamic unity, and the Karbala event should be relayed and presented correctly. Many of those who read the narration of Karbala rely on false and superficial and unfounded events.

Today, we call the narrators to relay the story of Karbala in a realistic historical manner, so that we understand its real meaning, significance, and impact on our reality. We want Ashura to benefit from the modern technical means; starting from theatre, the art of the creative novel, and the art of acting. We want the world to see the humanitarian and Islamic revolution, in which the values are embodied in the movement, and the cause integrates with the tragedy, and the sacrifice unites with the responsibility. Ashura is not for the backward people, but for the free ones who seek freedom in their struggle against the tyrants and arrogant powers. Karbala is for those who stood up against Zionism and triumphed against it and gave us the meaning of victory Al-Hussein (a.s.) experienced when the blood triumphed over the sword. Those who fought Zionism achieved the first victory over it; the same goes for Gaza which showed us the meaning of steadfastness.O beloved ones,

Let us renew the cause of Ashura, so that it would live, and reach out to mankind, because in every era, we need something to renew our minds, and make us know how to deal with our present for the best of our future. Be those who look at the future, not those who lock themselves in the past. Peace be upon you.

* The speech of His Eminence, the Religious Authority Sayyed Muhammad Hussein Fadlullah in opening the conference held by the Contemporary Islamic Thought Institution, under the title of "Ashura: The Concept and the Function and the Potentials of Expressing", on 02/02/1430 H., 28/01/2009 A.D.

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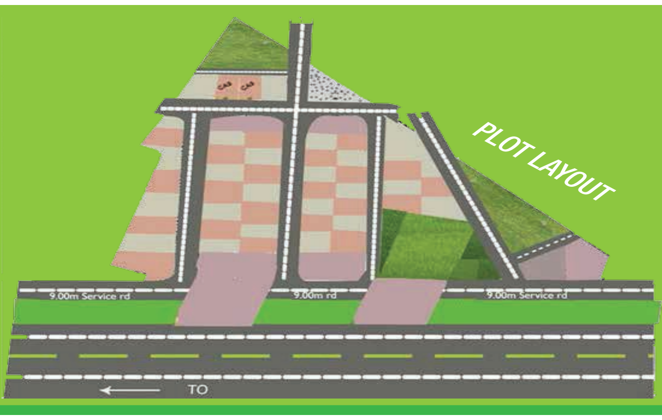


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Allama Iqbal & Imam Hussain

Iqbal's range, quality, and quantity are truly impressive. Apart from Urdu, he also wrote prodigiously in Persian and is regarded as one of the most important poets of modern India. In addition to his indubitable genius as a poet, Iqbal is also considered by many as a very important thinker and philosopher.

His legacy endures in the country (Pakistan) he is believed by many to have envisioned. However his recognition and influence go far beyond his country as his thoughts and poetry have made him a cultural icon for many around the Muslim world. His revitalizing philosophy has inspired many leading figures.

Questions regarding the coherence of Iqbal's views –questions such as whether these views could all be taken together without contradiction, whether readers should discredit any particular view if proven incoherent or incompatible with others, and the like– continue to draw the attention of more objective historians and philosophers. Taking this approach, however, risks confusing Iqbal's legend as a poet with what is significant for one in his philosophical thought.

While I do not necessarily subscribe to Iqbal's ideology and his political philosophy, I have great admiration for him as a poet and as a colossal literary figure. I do not confuse between the two 'Iqbals' as either of them neither diminishes nor augments the other. The advent of Moharram each year particularly reminds me of Iqbal because Iqbal's inspiration from Karbala transcends well beyond any sectarian confines, as does Iqbal himself. Iqbal propagates a universal message to mankind to emulate Imam Hussain who sacrificed his life at the altar of Truth. Indeed, Imam Hussain's heritage is for all noble people and cannot be reduced to one Muslim sect or the other.

Here is some of Iqbal's poetry about Imam Hussain.

Haqeeqat e abadi hey maqaam e Shabbiri
Badaltey rehtey hei'n andaaz e kufi o shami
(Bal e Jibril)

Hussain was the symbol of devotion to truth and love for God. The inspiring glory of his martyrdom is an eternal certainty that will forever provide guidance to drive our conduct. It represents truth that never changes. Whereas the shenanigans of the ilk that ruled Kufa and Syria continue to change garbs and use new tricks to gain ascendency through deceit, expediency, manoeuvring, and cruelty.

Amidst many sterling examples that adorn the human history, no one has exercised his right to say NO with so much courage and resolve as Hussain. Hussain showed that our rights and freedom go hand in hand with our duty and dignity. There are so many occasions in everyday life that make us confront the relation between the goods of life and human dignity and we can always draw on Karbala's unique capacity for moral guidance and spiritual awakening bestowing intrinsic dignity and integrity upon the moment in question and upon our life overall.

Ik faqr hey Shabbiri is faqr mei'n hey miri
Meeras e musalmani sarmaya e Shabbiri
(Bal e Jibril)

Iqbal says that Hussain exemplifies empowerment without worldly riches and might. This is the power of truth represented by a noble life and death rather than by the ways of a hermit seeking seclusion. Hussain's conduct and nobility constitute a proud heritage for the Muslims. It is incumbent upon Muslims to follow Hussain in always adhering to truth and justice when making choices in life's situations. It is only in honouring Hussain's legacy of courage, sacrifice, and steadfastness that Muslims can find real glory in this world and hereafter.

Gharib-o-sāda-o-rangi'n hay dāstān-e-Haram
Nihāyat iski Hussain ibtida hay Ismāil
(Bal e Jibril)

Iqbal says the narrative of Kaba is simple, straightforward, and interesting. It starts with Prophet Ismail, who laid the first stone and suffered great pains in its construction. He offered for sacrifice his own life but the sacrifice was not completed as he was replaced by a ram and according to the Holy Quran the great sacrifice or Zibh-e 'Azim was to come later and be completed by one of his descendants, Hussain. In between we had a number of prophets till Prophet Mohammad rid it of idols and restored its purity. Then came Hussain, as the culmination of Zibh e Azim, who sacrificed his life and preserved the glory of Kaba for eternity.

Roney wālā hoon shaheed-e-Karbala kay gham may mei'n
Kyā durrey maqsad na dai'ngay Sāqi-e-Kausar mujhey
(Baqiyat e Iqbal)

Not only does Iqbal cry over the Karbala's tragedy and Imam Hussain but he also sees it as a source of his salvation. He believes that Saqi-e-Kausar (Lord of Cistern in Paradise), Prophet Muhammad, loves those who weep for Imam Hussain and thus would also fulfil Iqbal's heart's desire.

Reg e Iraq muntazir, kisht e Hijaz tashna kaam
Khoon e Hussain bazdeh Kufa o Sham khuwesh ra
(Zaboor e Ajam)

While the sand of Iraq is avidly looking forward to kiss Hussain's feet, the land of Hijaz is miserable because Hussain is departing from it. Iqbal movingly describes the fields of Hijaz as thirsty as an allegory of Hussain's thirst in Karbala. Then Iqbal says that every age has its own Kufa and Syria and a dignified human existence calls for upholding the values defended with his blood by Hussain.



Teer a sanaan o khanjar o shamsheeram aarzoost
Ba man maya keh maslak e Shabeeram aarzoost
(Payam e Mashriq)

Iqbal expresses an ardent longing to follow Hussain's conduct. However he knows what his desire entails in terms of trials and tribulations. Only someone who is voluntarily willing to embrace injury and death should envisage treading on the path of Hussain. Hussain and the group of his heroic companions, including women and children, rose to defend the principles that should be dear to all noble souls. His sacrifice teaches all of us a lesson in adhering to truth and our duty in the face of all harm and adversity. It is only if we are willing to lose everything that we can be truly free.

Ān Imam-e-āshiqān poor e Batool
Sarvay āzād e ze bustān-e-Rasul
(Asrar o Ramooz)

Iqbal's says that Fatima's son is the leader of the lovers of God and the insuperable tree from the garden of Prophet.

Allah Allah Bāey Bismillah pidar
Ma'niye zibh-e-azim āmad pisar
(Asrar o Ramooz)

While blissfully emphasizing the unmatchable distinction of Imam Hussain, Iqbal says that whereas his illustrious father (Ali) was the first letter of the Quran*, Zibh e Azim in the Quran means the sacrifice of Imam Hussain.

*Here Iqbal refers to tradition that quotes Hazrat Ali as saying: "What is in the Holy Qur'an is in the first chapter (Surah Fatiha); what is in this surah (chapter) is in the first verse (Bismillah); what is in Bismillah is in its first letter (Ba); what is in ba is in the dot below it and verily I am the dot below ba".

Surkh roo ishq-e-ghayoor az Khoon-e-oo
Surkhiye i'n misra az mazmoon-e-oo
(Asrar o Ramooz)

Iqbal says that it is because of Imam Hussain's sacrifice that the love with highest sense of dignity has been lifted to the zenith of honour. It owes its colour and glow to Hussain's blood.

Zindah haq az quwwat-e-Shabbiri ast
Bātil ākhir dāgh-e-hasrat miri ast
(Asrar o Ramooz)

Iqbal says that truth continues to live on by virtue of the strength imparted to it by Imam Hussain, thus rendering it immortal. His sacrifice to proclaim right in the face of wrong remains beyond compare in the history. While the wrong may seem to triumph for a while, Imam Hussain has shown that its triumph is always bound to be ephemeral and it invariably meets its end in obliteration.

Bahre haq dar Khāk-o-khoon ghaltida ast
Pas binā ey lā illah gardida ast
(Asrar o Ramooz)

Hussain suffered the utmost tribulations and his blood was spilt on the sands of Karbala for the sake of Truth. Hence, Iqbal convincingly concludes, that Hussain laid the foundation of Islam that there is no God except Allah. As the tenets of Islam were being distorted and disfigured Hussain came forward and his blood gave Islam and truth a new life.

Wan digar mawlaa-e ibraar-e-jahaan
Quwwat-e baazu-e ahraar-e-jahaan
(Ramooz e Bekhudi)

Hussain is the leader of the pious of the world and a source of strength for all the campaigners of justice and deliverance from tyranny in the world. Iqbal thus sees Hussain as a universal icon to inspire and unite all noble people in their pursuit of truth and justice for all. Following Hussain's immense sacrifice, the path of deliverance –to always differentiate right from wrong- lies open before each of us.

Dar nawaa e zindagi soz az Hussain
Ahl e haq hurriat amoz az Hussain
(Ramooz e Bekhudi)

Hussain becomes passion to the tone of life by inspiring courage in us to make truth the core of our being in all circumstances. Hussain empowers the truthful people in their quest to achieve and sustain true freedom. His laying down his life instead of conceding his principles in the face of a tyrant's demand has set a moral paradigm that remains unequalled in its significance and influence.

Musa o Firo'n o Shabbir o Yazid
Ee'n do quwat az hayat aamad padeed
(Ramooz e Bekhudi)

The evil and virtue and truth and deceit came into being with life. These opposing forces have ever since been incompatible and in conflict with each other. The paramount paragons of the eternal tussle between right and wrong were set by the conflict between Moses and Pharaoh and the clash between Imam Hussain and Yazid and are forever personified by the struggle between those who subscribe to the values and principles of Moses and Hussain and those who follow the path of Pharaoh and Yazid.

Azma e oo'n choo'n kohsaraa'n ustawaar
Paidaar o tundseer o kamgaar
(Ramooz e Bekhudi)

Iqbal describes that Hussain's resolve is as firmly founded as the mighty mountains. He was steadfast in his choice to not plead allegiance to an unjust and cruel ruler and no amount of persuasion and suffering were able to waver him from the right path.

Tegh behr e izzat e dee'n ast o bas
Maqsad e oo hifz e aa'in ast o bas
(Ramooz e Bekhudi)

Iqbal says that Hussain's sword was devoted exclusively to upholding the honour of his faith. Hussain's sole purpose in defying Yazid's orders was to defend God's word. It is clear that if Hussain had not stood up to Yazid, Yazid would have felt completely uninhibited to manipulate and sabotage the dictums of Islam in accordance with his wantonness. Hussain's stand and tribulation stirred the soul of people and nourished a spirit of valour and sacrifice for truth that continues to flourish from the time of Karbala.

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Sirr e Ibrahim o Ismail bood
Ya'ni aa'n ijmaal ra tafseel bood
(Ramooz e Bekhudi)

Iqbal explains that Hussain in Karbala is the true construal of Prophets Ibrahim and Ismail's episode, which in fact was only a prelude to the epitome of sacrifice that was wrought in Karbala by the progeny of Prophet Muhammad with its blood. As we know when Prophet Ibrahim prepared to sacrifice his son Ismail in the way of God, God saved Ismail and sent a lamb to be sacrificed instead. God said Ismail's sacrifice is being replaced with the 'Zibh e Azim', The Grand Slaughter. The exact words of God are: "wa fadainaho be Zibhin Azim" (37-107) (Translation: And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice – Yusuf Ali). Iqbal here echoes numerous foremost Muslim scholars (for example, Shah Wali-ullah, in Sirrush Shahadaytan) in describing that 'Zibhin Azim' in the Quran denotes Imam Hussain's sacrifice in Karbala.

Dushmanaa'n choo'n reg e sehra lata'daad
Dosta'n oo bah yazdaa'n ham a'dad
(Ramooz e Bekhudi)

The entire land around Hussain abounded with his enemies like a desert bursting with sand. Whereas, Hussain only had very few companions (72) barely, adding up to equal the numerical summation of the alphabets in 'Yazdaa'n' – a word that means God.

Bahray ān shahzādaey Khayrul milal
Dosh-e-Khatmul mursali'n ne'mul Jamal
(Ramooz e Bekhudi)

Iqbal here alludes to an event stated by Tirmizi and others. Once Imam Hussain mounted the shoulders of his grandfather, the Holy Prophet. Somebody said, "What a good carriage it is!" The Prophet said, "And what a good rider it is!"

Dr Iqbal mentions this event to show what an immense value the Holy Prophet placed on his love towards his grandson.

Darmiyān-e-Ummat ān Keywān janāb,
Hamchu harf-e-Qul Huwallah dar Kitāb
(Ramooz e Bekhudi)

Here Iqbal talks about the status of Hussain, stating that among the followers of the Prophet, Imam Hussain enjoys the same position as the verses of Qul Huwallah in the Quran. Just as Qul Huwallah (Say that He is One) is the most and absolutely unambiguous and definite commandment in the Quran, Imam Hussain distinguishes himself among the followers of the Prophet through his immovable conviction and allegiance to truth.

Choon Khilāfat rishtah az Qur'an gusikht
Hurriyat ra Zahr under Kām rikht
(Ramooz e Bekhudi)
Khāst ān sar Jalwaey Khairul Umam
Choon Sahabe Qiblah Bārān dar qadam
(Ramooz e Bekhudi)
Bar zamin-e-Karbala Bārid o raft
Lalah dar wirānaha Kārid o raft
(Ramooz e Bekhudi)
Tā qayāmat qat'ay istibdād kard
Mauj e Khoone oo chaman ijād kard
(Ramooz e Bekhudi)

Iqbal says that when the Muslim's polity severed its relation with the injunctions of the Holy Qur'an it subjugated the truth and freedom. Whole social order was besmirched and nobody could utter a word against the tyrant rulers and their regime. And then came Hussain, who rose like a cloud carrying blessed rain of mercy under his feet. It poured blessings on the arid sands of Karbala, transforming that desert into a blooming garden of truth and humanity. Thus Hussain was undoubtedly the saviour of freedom and Karbala has become an eternal symbol and inspiration for struggle against tyranny. Iqbal says that Imam Hussain uprooted despotism forever and his surging blood has nourished a timeless blossom of truth and freedom.

Mudda ā yash saltanat boody agar
Khud na hardy bā chuni'n sāmmāne safar
(Ramooz e Bekhudi)

Iqbal explains that Imam Hussain's only aim in refusing to swear allegiance to Yazid was to uphold the truth. It is borne out by the fact that when he left Medina for Mecca, he only had a small band of his kith and kin, including his sisters and children, one of whom was just a few days old. Some of his companions were more than eighty years old. If he had envisaged raging a political battle or struggle, he would not have taken such people along with him.

Tegh-e-lā choo'n az miya'n buroo'n kashid
Az rag-e-arbāb e bātil khoo'n kashid
Naqsh-e-Illallāh bar Sahra nawisht
Satr-e-unwān-e-najat-e mā nawisht
Ramz-e-Qur'an az Hussain āmokhteem
Za Ātishe-oo Shoalahā andokhteem
(Ramooz e Bekhudi)

Imam Hussain's sword of 'NO' took out the blood from the followers of oppressive tyranny. He stamped the mark of God's unity in the desert of Karbala and thus wrought the narrative of our salvation. In fact we have learnt the true meanings and intent of the Quran from Hussain, who lived by its code of truth and principles in its entirety. The flames of truth and the love for God blazing in our hearts owe their warmth to the fire lit by Hussain.

Shawkat-e-Shām-o farray Baghdad raft,
Satwat-e-Gharnata ham az yād raft
(Ramooz e Bekhudi)
Tār-e-mā az zakhma ash larzān hanooz,
Tazāh az takbir-e-oo Imā'n hanooz
(Ramooz e Bekhudi)

Iqbal says that kingly grandeur gained through political battles is but temporary. The pomp and vanity of the thrones of Syria and Baghdad which were once seats of mighty kings are indeed no more. Nobody remembers the splendour of Granada which was the centre of the Muslim monarchy in Spain. But every fibre in me still responds to Hussain's call in Karbala and his message continues to nourish our faith.

Ay sabā ay payk-e-dūr uftādagā'n,
Ashk-e-mā bar khāk-e-pāk-e-oo rasā'n
(Ramooz e Bekhudi)

This couplet eloquently portrays Iqbal's love for and faith in Imam Hussain. Iqbal so tenderly addresses himself to the breeze, which proverbially carries the message of the lover to the beloved in a far off place. Iqbal asks the breeze to carry his tears, as he weeps for Imam Hussain, to the sacred soil of Karbala so as to place them on the grave of Imam Hussain.

The imagery becomes even more colourful in the following centuries when the Shi'i character of the Bektashi order increased and made itself felt in ritual and poetical expression. Husayn b. 'Ali is 'the secret of God', the 'light of the eyes of Mustafa'

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Karbala and the Imam Husayn in Persian and Indo-Muslim literature

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I still remember the deep impression which the first Persian poem I ever read in connection with the tragic events of Karbala' left on me. It was Qaani's elegy which begins with the words:

What is raining? Blood.
Who? The eyes.
How? Day and night.
Why? From grief.
Grief for whom?
Grief for the king of Karbala'

This poem, in its marvellous style of question and answer, conveys much of the dramatic events and of the feelings a pious Muslim experiences when thinking of the martyrdom of the Prophet's beloved grandson at the hands of the Umayyad troops.

The theme of suffering and martyrdom occupies a central role in the history of religion from the earliest time. Already, in the myths of the ancient Near East, we hear of the hero who is slain but whose death, then, guarantees the revival of life: the names of Attis and Osiris from the Babylonian and Egyptian traditions respectively are the best examples for the insight of ancient people that without death there can be no continuation of life, and that the blood shed for a sacred cause is more precious than anything else. Sacrifices are a means for reaching higher and loftier stages of life; to give away parts of one's fortune, or to sacrifice members of one's family enhances one's religious standing; the Biblical and Qur'anic story of Abraham who so deeply trusted in God that he, without questioning, was willing to sacrifice his only son, points to the importance of such sacrifice. Iqbal was certainly right when he combined, in a well known poem in Bal-i Jibril (1936), the sacrifice of Ismail and the martyrdom of Husayn, both of which make up the beginning and the end of the story of the Ka'ba.

Taking into account the importance of sacrifice and suffering for the development of man, it is not surprising that Islamic history has given a central place to the death on the battlefield of the Prophet's beloved grandson Husayn, and has often combined with that event the death by poison of his elder brother Hasan.



In popular literature we frequently find both Hasan and Husayn represented as participating in the battle of Karbala', which is historically wrong, but psychologically correct.

It is not the place here to discuss the development of the whole genre of marthiya and taziya poetry in the Persian and Indo-Persian world, or in the popular Turkish tradition. But it is interesting to cast a glance at some verses in the Eastern Islamic tradition which express predominantly the Sunni poets' concern with the fate of Husayn, and echo, at the same time, the tendency of the Sufis to see in him a model of the suffering which is so central for the growth of the soul.

The name of Husayn appears several times in the work of the first great Sufi poet of Iran, Sana'i (d. 1131). Here, the name of the martyred hero can be found now and then in connection with bravery and selflessness, and Sana'i sees him as the prototype of the shahid, higher and more important than all the other shahids who are and have been in the world:

Your religion is your Husayn, greed and wish are your pigs and dogs

You kill the one, thirsty, and nourish the other two. [Divan, p. 655]

This means that man has sunk to such a lowly state that he thinks only of his selfish purposes and wishes and does everything to fondle the material aspects of his life, while his religion, the spiritual side of his life, is left without nourishment, withering away, just like Husayn and the martyrs of Karbala' were killed after nobody had cared to give them water in the desert. This powerful idea is echoed in other verses, both in the Divan and in the Hadiqat al-Haqiqa; but one has to be careful in one's assessment of the long praise of Husayn and the description of Karbala' as found in the Hadiqa, as they are apparently absent from the oldest manuscripts of the work, and may have been inserted at some later point. This, however, does not concern us here. For the name of the hero, Husayn, is found in one of the central poems of Sana'is Divan, in which the poet describes in grand images the development of man and the long periods of suffering which are required for the growth of everything that aspires to perfection. It is here that he sees in the 'street of religion' those martyrs who were dead and are alive, those killed by the sword like Husayn, those murdered by poison like Hasan (Divan 485).

The tendency to see Husayn as the model of martyrdom and bravery continues, of course, in the poetry written after Sana'i by Persian and Turkish mystics, and of special interest is one line in the Divan of 'Attar (nr. 376) in which he calls the novice on the path to proceed and go towards the goal, addressing him:

Be either a Husayn or a Mansur.

That is, Husayn b. Mansur al-Hallaj, the arch-martyr of mystical Islam, who was cruelly executed in Baghdad in 922. He, like his namesake Husayn b. 'Ali, becomes a model for the Sufi; he is the suffering lover, and in quite a number of Sufi poems his name appears alongside that of Husayn: both were enamoured by God, both sacrificed themselves on the Path of divine love, both are therefore the ideal lovers of God whom the pious should strive to emulate. Ghalib skillfully alludes to this combination in his tawhid qasida:

God has kept the ecstatic lovers like Husayn and Mansur in the place of gallows and rope, and cast the fighters for the faith, like Husayn and 'Ali, in the place of swords and spears: in being martyrs they find eternal life and happiness and become witnesses to God's mysterious power.

This tradition is particularly strong in the Turkish world, where the names of both Husayns occur often in Sufi songs.

Turkish tradition, especially in the later Bektashi order, is deeply indebted to Shi'i Islam; but it seems that already in some of the earliest popular Sufi songs in Turkey, those composed by Yunus Emre in the late 13th or early 14th century, the Prophet's grandsons played a special role. They are described, in a lovely song by Yunus, as the 'fountain head of the martyrs', the 'tears of the saints', and the 'lambs of mother Fatima'. Both of them, as the 'kings of the eight paradises', are seen as the helpers who stand at Kawthar and distribute water to the thirsting people, a beautiful inversion of Husayn suffering in the waterless desert of Karbala'. (Yunus Emre Divani, p. 569.)

The well known legend according to which the Prophet saw Gabriel bring a red and a green garment for his two grandsons, and was informed that these garments pointed to their future deaths through the sword and poison respectively, is mentioned in early Turkish songs, as it also forms a central piece of the popular Sindhimanaqiba which are still sung in the Indus Valley. And similar in both traditions are the stories of how the boys climbed on their grandfather Prophet's back, and how he fondled them. Thus, Hasan and Husayn appear, in early Turkish songs, in various, and generally well known images, but to emphasize their very special role, Yunus Emre calls them 'the two earrings of the divine Throne'. (Divan, p. 569)

The imagery becomes even more colourful in the following centuries when the Shi'i character of the Bektashi order increased and made itself felt in ritual and poetical expression. Husayn b. 'Ali is 'the secret of God', the 'light of the eyes of Mustafa' (thus Seher Abdal, 16th cent.), and his contemporary, Hayreti, calls him, in a beautiful marthiya, 'the sacrifice of the festival of the greater jihad'. Has not his neck, which the Prophet used to kiss, become the place where the dagger fell?

The inhabitants of heaven and earth shed black tears today.
And have become confused like your hair, O Husayn.

Dawn sheds its blood out of sadness for Husayn, and the red tulips wallow in blood and carry the brandmarks of his grief on their hearts ... (Ergun, Bektasi sairleri, p. 95).

The Turkish tradition and that in the regional languages of the Indian subcontinent are very similar. Let us have a look at the development of the marthiya, not in the major literary languages, but rather in the more remote parts of the subcontinent, for the development of the Urdu marthiya from its beginnings in the late 16thcentury to its culmination in the works of Sauda and particularly Anis and Dabir is well known. In the province of Sind, which had a considerable percentage of Shi'i inhabitants, Persian marthiyas were composed, as far as we can see, from around 1700 onwards. A certain'Allama (1682-1782), and Muhammad Mu'in T'haro are among the first marthiya-gus mentioned by the historians, but it is particularly Muhammad Muhsin, who lived in the old, glorious capital of lower Sind, Thatta, with whose name the Persian marthiya in Sind is connected. During his short life (1709-1750), he composed a great number of tarji'band and particularly salam, in which beautiful, strong imagery can be perceived:

The boat of Mustafa's family has been drowned in blood;

The black cloud of infidelity has waylaid the sun;

The candle of the Prophet was extinguished by the breeze of the Kufans.

But much more interesting than the Persian tradition is the development of the marthiya in Sindhi and Siraiki proper. As Christopher Shackle has devoted a long and very informative article on the Multani marthiya, I will speak here only on some aspects of the marthiya in Sindhi. As in many other fields of Sindhi poetry, Shah 'Abdu'l-Latif of Bhit (1689-1752) is the first to express ideas which were later taken up by other poets. He devoted Sur Kedaro in his Hindi Risalo to the martyrdom of the grandson of the Prophet, and saw the event of Karbala' as embedded in the whole mystical tradition of Islam. As is his custom, he begins in media res, bringing his listeners to the moment when no news was heard from the heroes:

The moon of Muharram was seen, anxiety about the princes occurred.

What has happened?

Muharram has come back, but the Imams have not come.

O princes of Medina, may the Lord bring us together

He meditates about the reason for their silence and senses the tragedy:

The Mirs have gone out from Medina, they have not come back.

But then he realizes that there is basically no reason for sadness or mourning, for:

The hardship of martyrdom, listen, is the day of joy.

Yazid has not got an atom of this love.

Death is rain for the children of 'Ali.

For rain is seen by the Oriental poets in general, and by Shah 'Abdul Latif in particular, as the sign of divine mercy, of rahmat, and in a country that is so much dependant on rain, this imagery acquires its full meaning.

The hardship of martyrdom is all joyful rainy season.

Yazid has not got the traces of this love.

The decision to be killed was with the Imams from the very beginning.

This means that, already in pre-eternity, Hasan and Husayn had decided to sacrifice their lives for their ideals: when answering the divine address Am I not you Lord? (7:171), they answered 'Bala' (=Yes)', and took upon themselves all the affliction (bala) which was to come upon them. Their intention to become a model for those who gain eternal life by suffering and sacrifice was made, as Shah'Abdu'I-Latif reminds his listeners, at the very day of the primordial covenant. Then, in the following chapter, our Sindhi poet goes into more concrete details.

The perfect ones, the lion-like sayyids, have come to Karbala';

Having cut with Egyptian swords, they made heaps of carcasses;

Heroes became confused, seeing Mir Husayn's attack.

But he soon turns to the eternal meaning of this battle and continues in good Sufi spirit:

The hardship of martyrdom is all coquetry (naz).

The intoxicated understand the secret of the case of Karbala'.

In having his beloved suffer, the divine Beloved seems to show his coquetry, trying and examining their faith and love, and thus even the most cruel manifestations of the battle in which the 'youthful heroes', as Shah Latif calls them, are enmeshed, are signs of divine love.

The earth trembles, shakes; the skies are in uproar;

This is not a war, this is the manifestation of Love.

The poet knows that affliction is a special gift for the friends of God, Those who are afflicted most are the prophets, then the saints, then the others in degrees', and so he continues:

The Friend kills the darlings, the lovers are slain,

For the elect friends He prepares difficulties.

God, the Eternal, without need what He wants, He does.

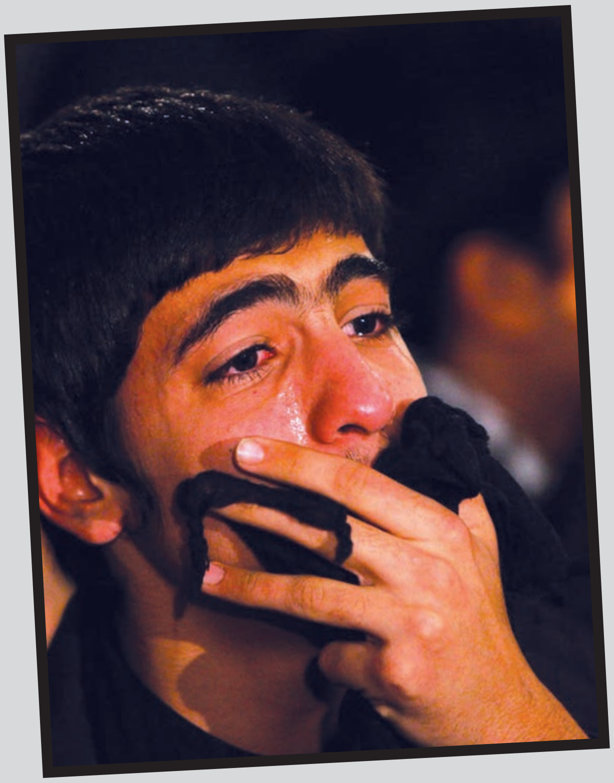
Shah 'Abdu'l-Latif devotes two chapters to the actual battle, and to Hurr's joining the fighters 'like a moth joins the candle', e.g., ready to immolate himself in the battle. But towards the end of the poem the mystical aspect becomes once more prominent; those who 'fight in the way of God' reach Paradise, and the houris bind rose chains for them, as befits true bridegrooms. But even more:

Paradise is their place, overpowering they have gone to Paradise,

They have become annihilated in God, with Him they have become He ...

The heroes, who have never thought of themselves, but only of love of God which makes them face all difficulties, have finally reached the goal: the fana fi Allah, annihilation in God and remaining in Him. Shah 'Abdu'l-Latif has transformed the life of the Imams, and of the Imam Husayn in particular, into a model for all those Sufis who strive, either in the jihad-i asghar or in the jihad-i akbar, to reach the final annihilation in God, the union which the Sufis so often express in the imagery of love and loving union. And it is certainly no accident that our Sindhi poet has applied the tune Husayni, which was originally meant for the dirges for Husayn, to the story of his favourite heroine, Sassui, who annihilated herself in her constant, brave search for her beloved, and is finally transformed into him.

Shah'Abdu'l-Latif's interpretation of the fate of the Imam Husayn as a model of suffering love, and thus as a model of the mystical path, is a deeply impressive piece of literature. It was never surpassed, although in his succession a number of poets among the Shi'i of Sindh composed elegies on Karbala' . The most famous of them is Thabit 'Ali Shah (1740-1810), whose speciality was the genre of suwari, the poem addressed to the rider Husayn, who once had ridden on the Prophet's back, and then was riding bravely into the battlefield. This genre, as well as the more common forms, persists in Sindhi throughout



the whole of the 18th and 19th centuries, and even into our own times (Sachal Sarmast, Bedil Rohriwaro, Mir Hasan, Shah Naser, Mirza Baddhal Beg, Mirza Qalich Beg, to mention only a few, some of whom were Sunni Sufis). The suwari theme was lovingly elaborated by Sangi, that is the Talpur prince 'Abdu'l-Husayn, to whom Sindhi owes some very fine and touching songs in honour of the prince of martyrs, and who strongly emphasizes the mystical aspects of the event of Karbala', Husayn is here put in relation with the Prophet.

The Prince has made his miraj on the ground of Karbala',

The Shah's horse has gained the rank of Buraq.

Death brings the Imam Husayn, who was riding his Dhu'l janah, into the divine presence as much as the winged Buraq brought the Prophet into the immediate divine presence during his night journey and ascent into heaven.

Sangi knows also, as ever so many Shi'i authors before him, that weeping for the sake of the Imam Husayn will be recompensed by laughing in the next world, and that the true meditation of the secret of sacrifice in love can lead the seeker to the divine presence, where, finally, as he says

Duality becomes distant, and then one reaches unity.

The theme of Husayn as the mystical model for all those who want to pursue the path of love looms large in the poetry of the Indus Valley and in the popular poetry of the Indian Muslims, whose thought was permeated by the teaching of the Suf'is, and for whom, as for the Turkish Suf'is and for 'Attar (and innumerable others), the suffering of the Imam Husayn, and that of Hasan b. Mansur, formed a paradigm of the mystic's life. But there was also another way to understand the role of Husayn in the history of the Islamic people, and importantly, the way was shown by Muham-mad Iqbal, who was certainly a Sunni poet and philosopher. We mentioned at the beginning that it was he who saw the history of the Ka'ba defined by the two sacrifices, that of Ismail at the beginning, and that of Husayn b. 'Ali in the end (Bal-i Jibril, p. 92). But almost two decades before he wrote those lines, he had devoted a long chapter to Husayn in his Rumuz-i bekhudi (p. 126ff). Here, Husayn is praised, again in the mystical vocabulary, as the imam of the lovers, the son of the virgin, the cypresso of freedom in the Prophet's garden. While his father, Hazrat 'Ali, was, in mystical interpretation, the b of the bismi'llah, the son became identified with the 'mighty slaughtering', a beautiful mixture of the mystical and Qur'anic interpretations. But Iqbal, like his predecessors, would also allude to the fact that Husayn, the prince of the best nation, used the back of the last prophet as his riding camel, and most beautiful is Iqbal's description of the jealous love that became honoured through his blood, which, through its imagery, again goes back to the account of the martyrdom of Husayn b. Mansur al-Hallaj, who rubbed the bleeding stumps of his hands over his blackened face in order to remain surkh ru, red-faced and honoured, in spite of his suffering.

For Iqbal, the position of Husayn in the Muslim community is as central as the position of the surat al-ikhlas in the Holy Book.

Then he turns to his favourite topic, the constant tension between the positive and negative forces, between the prophet and saint on the one hand, and the oppressor and unbeliever on the other. Husayn and Yazid stand in the same line as Moses and Pharaoh. Iqbal then goes on to show how the khilafat was separated from the Qur'anic injunctions and became a worldly kingdom with the appearance of the Umayyads, and it was here that Husayn appeared like a raincloud, again the image of the blessing rain which always contrasts so impressively with the thirst and dryness of the actual scene of Karbala'. It was Husayn's blood that rained upon the desert of Karbala' and left the red tulips there.

The connection between the tulips in their red garments and the bloodstained garments of the martyrs has been a favourite image of Persian poetry since at least the 15th century, and when one thinks of the central place which the tulip occupies in Iqbal's thought and poetry as the flower of the manifestation of the divine fire, as the symbol of the Burning Bush on Mount Sinai, and as the flower that symbolizes the independent growth of man's khudi (=self) under the most difficult circumstances, when one takes all these aspects of the tulip together, one understands why the poet has the Imam Husayn 'plant tulips in the desert of Karbala". Perhaps the similarity of the sound of la ilah and lala (=tulip), as well as the fact that lala has the same numerical value as the word Allah, e.g., 66, may have enhanced Iqbal's use of the image in connection with the Imam Husayn, whose blood 'created the meadow', and who constructed a building of 'there is no deity but God.'

But whereas earlier mystical poets used to emphasize the person of Husayn as model for the mystic who through self-sacrifice, finally reaches union with God, Iqbal, understandably, stresses another point: 'To lift the sword is the work of those who fight for the glory of religion, and to preserve the God-given order.' 'Husayn blood, as it were, wrote the commentary on these words, and thus awakened a sleeping nation.'

Again, the parallel with Husayn b. Mansur is evident (at least with Husayn b. Mansur in the way Iqbal interprets him: he too claims, in the Falak-i mushtari in theJavidnama, that he had come to bring resurrection to the spiritually dead, and had therefore to suffer). But when Husayn b. 'Ali drew the sword, the sword of Allah, he shed the blood of those who are occupied with, and interested in, things other than God; graphically, the word la, the beginning of the shahada, resembles the form of a sword (preferably a two-edged sword, like Dhu'l-fiqar), and this sword does away with everything that is an object of worship besides God. It is the prophetic 'No' to anything that might be seen beside the Lord. By using the sword of 'No', Husayn, by his martyrdom, wrote the letters 'but God' (illa Allah) in the desert, and thus wrote the title of the script by which the Muslims find salvation.

It is from Husayn, says Iqbal, that we have learned the mysteries of the Qur'an, and when the glory of Syria and Baghdad and the marvels of Granada may be forgotten, yet, the strings of the instrument of the Muslims still resound with Husayn's melody, and faith remains fresh thanks to his call to prayer.

Husayn thus incorporates all the ideals which a true Muslim should possess, as Iqbal draws his picture: bravery and manliness, and, more than anything else, the dedication to the acknowledgement of God's absolute Unity; not in the sense of becoming united with Him in fana as the Sufi poets had sung, but, rather, as the herald who by his shahada, by his martyrdom, is not only a shahid, a martyr, but at the same time a witness, a shahid, for the unity of God, and thus the model for all generations of Muslims.

It is true, as Iqbal states, that the strings of the Muslims' instruments still resound with his name, and we may close with the last verse of the chapter devoted to him in the Rumuz-i bekhudi:

O zephir, O messenger of those who are far away

Bring our tears to his pure dust.

C M Y K

The absence of ijtihad in Islam means the absence of critical thinking.

ZANJEER ZANI: Is it validated by Religion or Manifestation of Culture?

Ayatullah Khamenei:"Iin mokhalefat ba azadari neest, mokhalefat ba zaya kerdan azadari ast…"

[This opposition is not of azadari but of wasting azadari (Hoseini mourning)].

The Azadari seen mostly are a set of rituals which are done with the purpose of earning rewards, expressing love of Imam Hussain (a.s.) in the form of grief, or expressing condolence to his mother Fatima Zahra (s.a.). Whereas Azadari in its true sense is awakening of the Ummah to stand and protest against the Yazid of our age and denounce their cruel and harmful policies towards Islam, and this spirit is very much lacking in our Azadari sessions, and this can only be enlightened through the Wilayat of the righteous, that is the Ulama (Faqih) during the occultation of Imam-e-Zamana (a.t.f.s.).

As far as mourning is concerned and getting attention of world, Azadari should be performed with discipline and in a civilized manner.

Some says; doing qama is part of Aqeedah, whereas Taqleed is forbidden in Aqeedah, so what concern we have with the Marjae's?

Aqeedah (Usool example Tauheed) is belief and beliefs are always in the heart, when the beliefs get manifested in practical form it becomes Furoo (example Salaat), and all Furoo are controlled by laws of Shariah. Now love for Allah is Tauheed, but when the same love comes into action it become Salaat, which is Furoo, and Shariah will tell us the way of Salaat. In a similar way, the love of Imam Hussain (a.s.) is Aqeedah, but when the same love comes in practical form, it becomes Furoo (example Azadari) and has to be controlled by Shariah.

As far as matter of Hazrate Owais-e-Qarani is concerned, he didn't break his teeth deliberately but infact it was an emotional act and was not pre-planned . He broke his teeth the moment he heard the news of the Prophet's broken teeth. So if we suppose that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) didn't object to it still we can't relate it to Zanjeer and Qama Zani. Because (1) we do Zanjeer and Qama Zani intentionally and we do it every year and Owais-e-Qarani did it only once.

(2) We see no continuation of such practice after Owais-e-Qarani, hence proving that its not desirable or Mustahab thing otherwise other companions (Sahaba) would have done it or after that any of companions of Aimma would have done it when hearing of martyrdom of any Imam.

Hence it is proved that we find no legal status of shedding blood deliberately and make a practice of it every year rather then we should try to find out the ways which Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) have done. Don't forget after Imam Hussain (AS), we have the history of eight (8) Imams. Why sticks to the act of Hazrate Owais-e-Qarani only?

We reproduce two questions posed to two of the greatest Marja of our time regarding the issue.

Question: My brother wants to do Qama on 20th of Safar. Since he is following Ayatollah Sistani, can I stop him from doing Qama?

Answer by Board of Istifa, Office of Grand Ayatollah Sistani:

The main objective of mourning and lamentation during 'Ashura', is to respect the signs and symbols of religion and remember the suffering of Imam Hussain (as), his companions, and his uprising to defend Islam and prevent the destruction of the religion by Bani Umayyad dynasty. These rites must be done in such a way that in addition to serving that purpose, it draws the attention of others to these lofty goals. Also its ritual aspect should be preserved. So those actions which are not understandable for the enemies of Islam and non-Shia Muslims and causes misunderstanding and contempt for the religion must be avoided.

Question: I want to know the status of beating our backs with knives (ZANJEER) on the day of Ashura? What is it status in our Fiqh?



Answer by Board of Istifa, Office of Grand Ayatollah Sistani: The philosophy of mourning during 'Ashura', is to respect the symbols of religion and remember the suffering of Imam Hussain (as), his companions, and his uprising to defend Islam and prevent the destruction of the religion by Bani Umayyad dynasty. These rites must be done in such a way that in addition to serving that purpose, it draws the attention of others to these lofty goals. So those actions which are not understandable and causes misunderstanding and contempt for the religion must be avoided.

Ayatollah Khamenei: Practical Laws of Islam >> Religious Events

Q1430: What is the view on beating the drum and cymbal, blowing the trumpet, and lashing oneself with chains with blades during the processions of the commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s.)?

A: If the use of such chains leads, in the eye of the public, to defaming our school of thought or inflicting a noticeable harmful effect on the body, it is not permissible. There is no harm in using the drum, cymbal, and trumpet in the traditional way.

Q1439: Is there any basis in religion for piercing one's body with weights dangling therefrom, all in the name of commemorating the martyrdom of the Imam Husayn (a.s.)?

A: These acts, which are, inevitably, bound to portray our school of thought in a negative shade, are impermissible.

Q1449: In commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s.) on the tenth of Muharram, some people hit themselves with a machete, or walk bare-footed on fire. Such actions defame Shi'ism and put it in a bad light, if not undermine it. They cause bodily and spiritual harms on these doing it as well. What is your opinion in this matter?

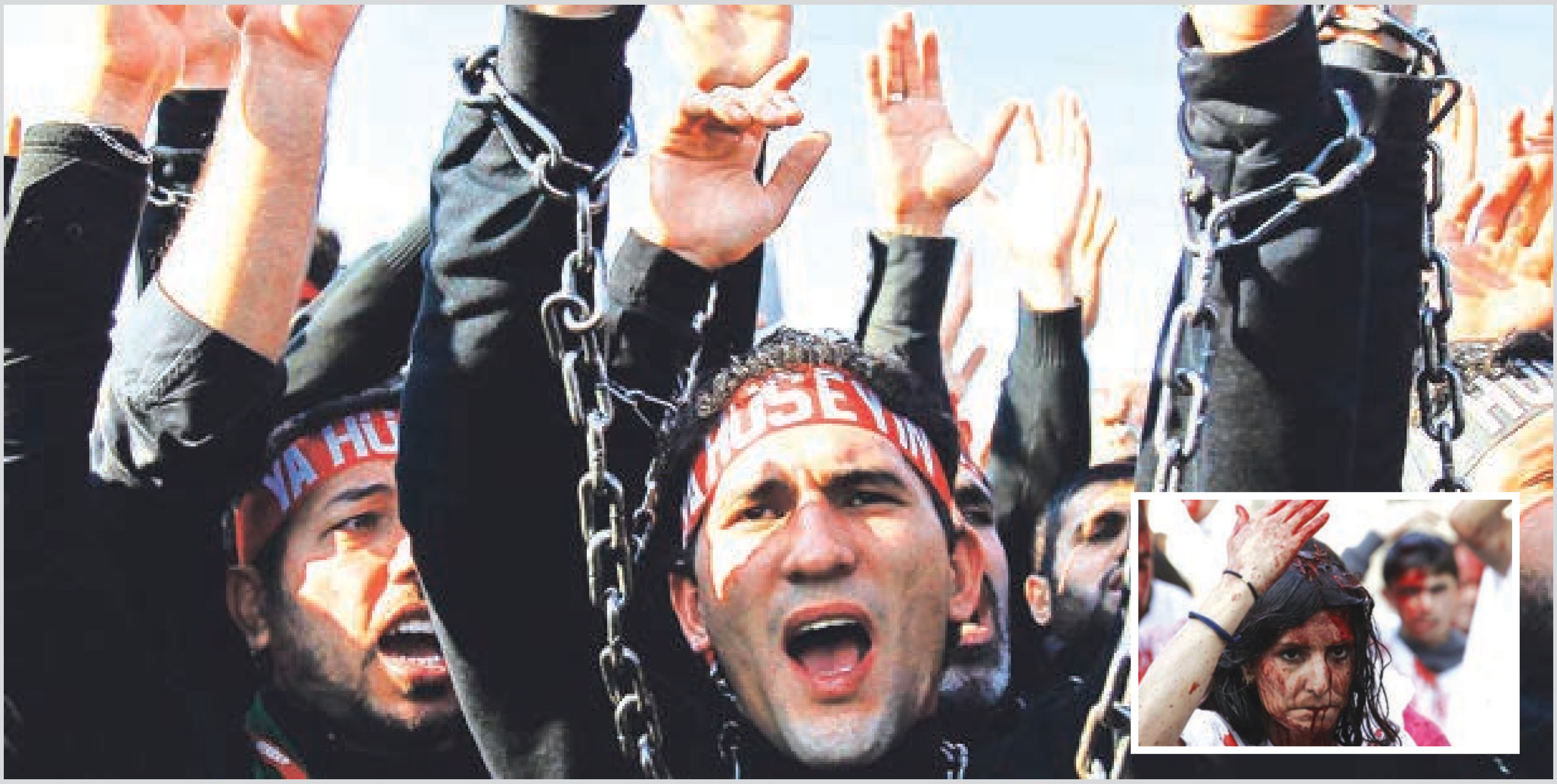
A: Any practice that causes bodily harm, or leads to defaming the faith, is Haram. Accordingly, the believers have to steer clear of it. There is no doubt that many of these practices besmirch the image of Ahlul Bayt's (a.s.) School of Thought which is the worst damage and loss.

Q1450: Is hitting oneself with swords Halal if it is done in secret? Or is your fatwa in this regard universal?

A: In addition to the fact that it is not held in the common view as manifestations of mourning and grief and it has no precedent at the lifetime of the Imams (a.s.) and even after that and we have not received any tradition quoted from the Infallibles (a.s.) about any support for this act, be it privately or publicly, this practice would, at the present time, give

Ashura Is About More Than Bloodletting

Bloodletting may seem an excessively literal act, but it should not distract from the universality of grief expressed at Ashura writes Ahmed Moor in The Guardian, London



CONTRAST: Many Muslims (Like Turks above) have abandoned old ritual of blood letting and instead have adopted new ways to promote the message of Kerbala while in certain pockets of Muslim world extremists still defy Mujtahids and continue with the practice. (Inset pix shows women in defiance practising Qama in an Iraqi province)

Ashura is mostly acknowledged in the west for the symbolic bloodletting some Shia communities engage in. Indeed, I witnessed a limited amount of that in Nabatieh in southern Lebanon on 16 December. But it seemed incidental to what was really going on. The people around me were mourning; they coped with loss and they turned to their coreligionists for strength like anyone else would. What I witnessed was a resonant show of community. There was nothing extraordinary about that.

Hussein was the grandson of the prophet Muhammad, a fact that played an important role in his life and contributed to his death. His supporters – the Shia – believed that he was the rightful leader of the Muslim community, or ummah, because of his matrilineal descent. Sunnis, by contrast, believe that the caliph – or leader of the community – ought to be selected from those who are capable of leading.

The dispute over rightful succession compelled Hussein to challenge the sitting Ummayad caliph, Yazid in the year 680 AD. Tensions culminated in what is modern-day Iraq when a large caliphate force met Hussein's caravan on the banks of the Euphrates river. The lopsided battle of Karbala ended with Hussein's martyrdom and subsequent beheading. The day has been a source of Shia mourning ever since. Ashura – literally, "10th" in Arabic – is the day reserved for commemorating his martyrdom. It falls on the 10th day of the month of Muharram, which is where it gets its name from.

Over time, the mourning process has taken on different ritual manifestations. Re-enactments of the historic battle are often orchestrated and in some communities bloodletting is practiced. In many places, mourners only strike their chests with open hands.

Lebanon is one of those places. Most Shia here mark Hussein's martyrdom with sombre dress and public gatherings. Few people engage in the sensationalised bloodletting associated with the day and many eschew it altogether. For instance, Hezbollah provides a symbolic alternative by encouraging supporters to donate blood at blood banks it organises around the country.

There are places where bloodletting is still practised, however. Nabatieh, a small town in southern Lebanon, is one of them. I travelled there from Beirut to see the procession first-hand and witnessed something unexpectedly powerful. Villagers were coming together in a moment of communitarian grief created by the memory of a common loss.

Initially, the spectacle of public injury and bleeding made me uneasy, especially since many people's open wounds were exposed to other people's blood. But thoughts about the risk subsided eventually and I became inured to the scene after a few minutes. A big part of that had to do with witnessing how the superficial wounds are made; a barber's razor is tapped lightly on the crown of the head to create a thin, inch-long cut. The area is highly vascularised and the resulting flow of blood is not commensurate with the severity of the wound. Most of these people weren't engaging in serious self-injury. And medics were on hand to treat members of the procession.

Once I understood that the physical injuries were superficial, it wasn't hard to focus on the less visually arresting, more emotional elements of what I was witnessing. An imam – or spiritual leader – recounted the story of Hussein's martyrdom over loudspeakers. He was occasionally so overwhelmed that his voice cracked and he wept. Some people loudly chanted "Haidar", while others were sombre in their grief.

This scene – one of public mourning – has been enacted virtually everywhere in the world at one point or another. Publicaly commemorating the lives and mourning the loss of historically significant figures is something many people do, and they do it with their communities. Public requiems, dirges, processions, hymnals, chants, wails and, sometimes, bloodletting are all employed to the same end. They are the rituals people use to generate communitarian bonds.

Bloodletting may seem like an excessively literal act in a symbolic procession – I think it probably is. But the communitarian grief, the historical commemoration, is something many of us can understand. It's something many of us have publicaly participated in after local or national tragedies. It is underpinned by a larger human experience that can be religious,

Dealing With Sectarianism

ZAFFAR BANGASH

In Islam difference of opinion is permitted but in a respectful manner. Sectarianism is a deliberately propagated ideology of hate in which one group of Muslims denounces another as 'kafirs' and even resorts to killing. Such hate ideology must be exposed and confronted.

O you who have become securely committed [to Allah]! Be overcautious of Allah [and His retribution] as is due to Him, and do not allow death to overtake you before you have surrendered yourselves unto Him (i.e., become Muslims).And hold fast, all together, unto the bond with Allah, and do not draw apart from one another… (3:102–103).

There is hardly a Muslim of any "sect" — Sunni, Shi'i, Deobandi, Barelvi, Wahhabi, etc. — who is not aware of these words of the majestic Qur'an. While Allah (swt) calls us Muslims or mu'mins, we have adopted other labels and some of us even kill those of other "sects" that we disagree with. Nowhere does the Qur'an endorse this trend, so how did we end up with these designations?

True, different interpretations of the Qur'an and of Islamic history are possible but we — the Muslims — would do well to keep in mind that the noble Messenger (pbuh) treated all his companions with love and affection. This does not mean that every sahabi was of equal standing or knowledge, yet a divergent group of people from Arab, Persian, Roman, Abyssinian and other backgrounds intermingled and lived together as brothers in faith. The only criterion of distinction was taqwa.

Today, however, taqwa seems to be lacking among most Muslims, hence the hate-filled allegations against one another as well as routine killings of those we disagree with. The Qur'an is emphatic about not killing an innocent person because it amounts to killing the entire humanity (5:32). All Muslims — even those that indulge in wanton killings — read these ayat of the noble Qur'an yet it appears as if Muslims have become consumed by collective insanity. How did the ummatan wasatan (the equitable Ummah) as described in the noble Qur'an lose its way into narrow-minded sectarianism that is tearing it apart? Surely, Muslims did not scale great heights in all fields of human endeavour — science, astronomy, medicine, mathematics, statecraft, etc. — through sectarianism. Nor was it the sword (or the gun) that spread the message of Islam to the rest of humanity notwithstanding the vicious allegations of anti-Muslim writers. The Islamic civilization lasted nearly 1,000 years, a feat never achieved in history before or after Islam.

There are historical reasons for differences among Muslims primarily over the question of succession after the Prophet (pbuh) left this earthly abode but this did not harden until after the martyrdom of Imam Husain (ra) in 61ah (680ce). Prior to the tragedy of Karbala, there had emerged among those that usurped power by subverting the khilafah into mulukiyah an attitude that the Algerian writer Malek Bennabi described as "the Jahili spirit [of 'asabiyah] contending with the Qur'anic spirit [of 'adl]."

Sectarianism is first and foremost a political rather than a theological issue and is used by those in power that lack legitimacy. They want to keep Muslims busy in polemics by playing on their raw emotions. Those who say that the Sahabah (Companions) should not be insulted are absolutely correct. Without getting into debate about who qualifies as a companion, how can these people then ignore the fact that it was Mu'awiyah who had started the campaign of vilification of Ahl al-Bayt (the Prophet's (pbuh) family), particularly Imam 'Ali (ra)? Even so sacred a space as the minbar of the masjid, including the one in Masjid-e Nabawi, was not spared from this hateful and un-Islamic campaign? Are those calling themselves "soldiers of the Sahabah" prepared to answer this question honestly? Do Imam 'Ali (ra) and Ahl al-Bayt not qualify as Sahabah?

We cannot close our eyes to the fact that terrible things happen on both sides of the Sunni-Shi'i divide. In the month of al-Muharram, for instance, some — repeat some — Shi'ia zakirs indulge in all kinds of vilification of the Sahabah who were close to the noble Messenger (pbuh). This must stop. Fortunately, the Rahbar of the Islamic Republic, Imam Seyyed Ali Khamenei has issued a fatwa declaring such vilification haram. Those (Shi'i) Muslims that claim to love Ahl al-Bayt ought to pay close attention to the Rahbar's fatwa/advice and act accordingly.

While we may not be able to end all our problems immediately, it would help if we understand the root cause of the problems and who benefits from propagating them. The late Dr. Kalim Siddiqui had good advice for Muslims: if "Shi'is" were to become a little less Shi'i and the "Sunnis" a little less Sunni and both a little more Muslim, we would all be much better off. Are we prepared to heed this advice?

If "Shi'is" were to become a little less Shi'i and the "Sunnis" a little less Sunni and both a little more Muslim, we would all be much better off. – Dr Kalim Siddiqui

KASHMIR OBSERVER
Tuesday 04 November 2014 | 10th Muharram 1436 Hijri

The Aashura Uprising
IMPACT ON MUSLIM UMMAH

BY: Syed Iliyas Ali Rizvi



Karbala Karbala Karbala
Karbala Karbala Karbala
Karbala is the garden of 'Swords
Blood and Inspiration for innumerable pens
Karbala is the 'Word of Right
Karbala is the 'Hymn' on the lips of time
Karbala is a Poem
Karbala is a 'Rhyme of anguish and pain

'Karbala' never passes away. Its sun never sets in the horizon of history. Its anguish can never be effaced from the conscience of the freemen by the collective conspiracy of tyrants. The sounds of the fearless voice of Imam Hussain (AS) still echoes in the Valley of Al – Tafoof – ringing in the ears of time. His voice is still echoing in the ears of humankind:

"By Allah, I will never give you my hand like a man who has been humiliated, nor will I flee like a slave."

Who actually is Imam Hussain? What is the background of this exceptionally unique and great personality? What is Karbala? What is Aashura? Why Imam Hussain (AS) stood against the Ruler Yazid?

Hussain – the Revolutionary!

This prominent man of history, the legend of epics, the word of pride and honour, was the grandson of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), the son of His daughter Fatimah – al – Zahra (SA) and His cousin, Ali bin Abi – Talib. Hussain (AS) was born in Al – Madinah Al Munawarah on the 3rd (and according to other sources 5th) of Shaban-ul-Mu'azam, 4AH. His birth was applauded by the prophetic family. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself named him Hussain. He was raised under the care of the Apostle of Allah (PBUH) and his daughter Fatimah and his son-in-law Ali. He expressed his deeply felt love for Hassan and Hussain in these words:

"Whoever loves Hassan and Hussain, loves me. And whoever dislikes them, he dislikes Me."

The Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) would offer his prayers while Hassan and Hussain would take turns in straddling his back. Thus, Imam Hussain (AS) was introduced to the Ummah, while still in the bloom of his childhood as a martyr. Hazrat Abu – Bakr al – Siddiq (AS) said:

"I heard the Apostle of Allah saying: Hassan and Hussain are the two Lords of the Youth of Paradise."

For these reasons, this personality won the hearts and minds of people. **The "Magnetic Power of Hussain"** made emotions overflows and the hearts cling passionately to him. Poets, generation after generation, during these 1400 years created inspired verse concerning him. The wellspring of his particular literature has yet to dry up. The poetic and artistic depiction of deepest remorse created by that tragedy and sacrifice are still pulsing with life.

The Uprising: Why?

The person of Hussain bin Ali (as) is a symbol, a school and a distinctly unique, political and religious revolutionary movement in the history of Islam. His was a tremendous undertaking which still reverberates throughout the Muslim nations. He has been a propelling force and a seminal element in events throughout Islamic history, particularly in the sphere of jihad (the Holy struggle in the way of Allah). Imam Hussain (AS) has been an example that has remained vividly alive for generations, and, centuries. A host of social, political and religious factors made Imam Hussain (AS) rise to challenge Yazid. A key factor was the violation of the principles upon which Islamic rule is based. The main principles Imam Hussain (AS) desired to keep alive were:

- Paying due attention to the public opinion of the Ummah, and regularly consulting it in the conduct of affairs.
- Law and Principles stand above everyone. They are the key standard according to which the ruler is evaluated. The legality of his position and his right to the exercise of power is similarly estimated.
- Establishment of justice and equality between all the people, regardless of social status in the sphere of rights and obligations.
- Assuring the leader is both efficient and righteous so that he can discharge his responsibilities.
- Equity in economic distribution ought to be firmly instituted.
- The right of criticizing, advising, guiding and discussing the policies of the leaders should be respected and institutionalized.

Thus, he rose. An uprising, led by the Noblest and best aspected personality in the entire Ummah, is certainly one which is uniquely distinguished as a **'movement abounding with spiritual, moral and religious ideals'**. Due to the importance of this personality, we are honoured to present this concise, well documented "Book of Hussainy Movement" – standing unequalled in its greatness and fills the pages upon pages of history. His letter read:

" . . . I am not taking up arms in order to make mercy or be ecstatic over what I possess. I am not making mischief, not exercising oppression. But I am ready to fight for the sole goal of seeking reform of the Ummah of my grandfather – the Apostle of Allah (PBUH). I want to enjoy good and forbid evil and guide the affairs of the people as my grandfather and father was doing . . ."

He, thus summed up the cause behind his refusal in giving pledge of allegiance to Yazid:

". . . Yazid is a corrupt man, who imbibes wine, puts to death the Soul which Allah forbids to be harmed and declares his debauchery in public. A man like me would never give pledge of all allegiance to Him . . ."

It was for these reasons that Imam Hussain (AS) declined to give an oath of allegiance to Yazid and set his heart on taking up against him. Imam Hussain (AS) pointed out "the qualifications for the True Imam", so as to nurture their political awareness and clearly identify the person worthy of being the leader of the Ummah:

". . . Forbid by my life, what is the True Imam except one who judges by the Book, one who upholds Justice, one who professes the Religion of Truth and one who dedicates himself to the Essence of Allah . . ."

He wrote to the key leaders of Basra namely: Malik Bin Masma Al – Bakri, Al Ahnaf Bin Qays, Al – Munthir, Masood Bin Amru, Qayas Bin Al – Haytham and Amru Bin Obayd Bin Muammir. Imam Hussain (AS) viewed question of state, politics, the Ummah, leadership and Imamate from the perspective of Holy Quran. As opposed to that, Yazid viewed these Questions from his **'Castle Of Oppression'.**

Reviewing the Imam's letters, arguments, sermons and correspondence (not dealt in this essay); along with the social, economic and political circumstances of the time, we can deduce the following realities:

- Oppression and monopoly of power on the part of Ummayyad was a fact. A distinct political class had taken shape. A tribal based party came into being which the Ummayyad group was. It monopolized power, wealth, and administration, whereas the majority of the people were deprived of these instruments, so much that the State became the private property of the Ummayyad.
- Murders, terror and shedding of blood prevailed.
- The Ummah's wealth was wastefully spent. The majority of the government officials were lacking in the qualifications to discharge their duties.
- Behavioural deviation became a social phenomenon. Corruption crept steadily into public life and its symptoms appeared in both individual and group.
- Law took a leave.
- A group of people assigned with distorting the traditions of the Prophet and forging new, false traditions appeared. Dialectic groups such as the **"Fatalists"** were formed to find suitable pretexts.

History conveys to us figures, and, accounts attesting the decline of social morals and the gap that yawned between people and divine values. An in-depth study of that epoch would maintain that the **"Hussainy Uprising was a Historical Necessity".**

The Aashura Uprising – Impact On Muslim Ummah?

The value of any purposeful religious and political action is estimated according to its results. Political and social actions may bear their fruits directly; still the results may lag behind the actions in terms of time. The aftershocks remain to interact and leave their traces long after the key events have taken place.

The **'Holy Caravan'** was headed by Hazrat Zainab (SA), sister of Imam Hussain (AS). They were taken as captives to Kufa. As they entered Damascus, the Ummayyad spies were spreading rumours that they have defeated a group of Kharijites. Out of their houses came the Syrians to watch the oppression. Finally, the prisoners were presented to Yazid. Al – Sajjad (as) and the captives remained in Syria for the time; then they returned to Karbala – on their way to Madina – bringing with them the heads to be buried with their bodies. Finally, they entered Madina. The news had already been spread among the people who raised their voices in weeping and lamentation. Madina – the **'City of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH)'** – lived through a period of depression and anger until it revolted against the Ummayyad Regime.

The Ummah began to feel the weight of having abandoned Imam Hussain (AS) to the hands of the Oppressor. A series of armed uprisings sprouted, weakening the Ummayyad and ending finally in the fall of that regime. Hussian's blood was thus the key element in precipitating its downfall. Hussainy Revolt smoothened the way for Abdullah Bin Al Zubayr to move at Mecca and declare war against the regime. The people of Madinah rose and turned him out of the city along with his entourage. At Kufa, there was the movement of the Tawabeen (Repentants) led by Sulayman Bin Sidr Al Khuza'i and Al - Fazari. The opposition continued its armed actions till the Abbassids overthrew the Ummayyad regime.

Imam Hussain (AS) kindled the flame of revolt against the Ummayyad and advocated the **"Rights of the Oppressed"**. Imam Hussain (AS) remains forever – a Slogan for the Revolutionaries, a Lighthouse for the Free and A Source of Struggle and Liberation.

Thus Thus was Aashura!
". . . A brilliant torch for Revolt, against the Tyranny.
A Symbol for Revolutionaries.
A Cause for Grief and Wailing!"

KASHMIR OBSERVER
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After Martyrdom



A SPEECH BY MARTYR ALI SHARIATI

Sisters and brothers!

Now the martyrs have died, but we dead are alive. The martyrs spoke their words and we remain deaf to their advice. They were brave enough to choose death when they were no longer able to remain alive.

They have left but we shamelessly remain. We have remained for hundreds of years. It is conceivable that people will laugh at us; that we, manifestations of abject¬ness and humility, are crying for Husayn ('a) and Zainab, manifestations of glory and greatness.

It is another one of the oppressions of history that we humiliated cry and mourn for those noble, great, dear honoured ones. Today the martyrs proclaim their message with their blood. They sit opposite us in order to invite those seated to arise.

In our culture, in our religion, in our Shi'ite history, humanity has created the most powerful life-giving germs that give life and excitement to history and divine lessons which teach man how to arise and reach God, heirs of all of the dear, divine assets are in the hands of the abject and humble and yet they are hidden.

We are heirs to the dearest savings which have been gathered by jihads, martyrdoms and the sacrificing of the noblest values of humanity.

We are heirs to all of these and we are responsible to be an example of a Community' (ummah) for humanity. As we are told in the Quran, "We made you, the modest community, in order for you to bear witness to other people as the messenger bears witness to you." So we are responsible, with this precious inheritance, !o our martyrs, warriors, leaders, commanders, faithful and our Book, to make a model community in order to bear witness to the people of the world and be the messengers to bear witness to this.

Such a mandate is a heavy one. The mandate of giving life, living and causing movement in humanity has been given to us, we who are unable to carry out our ordinary lives. Oh, my God! What wisdom is hidden in this? We who are drawn into foulness and our routine animal-like life, should we mourn and arrange lamentation ceremonies for men, women and children who in Karbala have proven martyrdom and who bear witness in history, in the presence of God and in the presence of freedom, forever?

Oh, God! What type of oppression is once more being committed against Husayn's ('a) family? The martyrs have finished their jobs. Now, in the middle of the night we are mourning for them and announce the end of their task. And you see, under the shelter of crying for Husayn ('a) and love of Husayn ('a), how we co-operate with Yazid who also wished to see this story end. The martyrs have finish¬ed their task and are silent but every one of them played their role perfectly.

The teacher, the person who calls out the time of prayer, young people, children, women, master and servant can all be representatives of a class who select a living death. These martyrs performed two jobs - from Husayn ('a)'s child to his brother - from his servant to himself - from the reciter of the Quran to the teacher of the Kufa children - from the one who calls out the time of prayer to those related or strangers to one another - from the nobles and respected ones of society to the ordinary man who held no respect in society - all stood as brothers, equal before martyrdom in order to teach all the men, women, children, old and young of history: How they should live if they could and how they should die if they could not.

Any one of these martyrs is a representative of his own class and yet showed another aim. They bore witness with their blood not with their words. They condemned the ruling system in the court of human history which determines the history of man, a system which employs policy, economics, religion, art, philosophy, thought, feelings, ethics and humanity in such a way as to sacrifice its people for the sake of its system. They condemn, by their martyrdom, all groups of people and human values which are used to build a support system for an oppressive and criminal government.

There is one ruler over history, one oppressor who rules history, one executioner who creates martyrs. Throughout history many have been the sacrificed of this executioner. Many women have been silenced by the whips of this executioner. At the price of much blood, desolate places have flourished. The hungry, the slaves, women and children have been massacred as well as men, heroes, servants, teachers throughout all ages and all generations.

Now, Husayn ('a), with everything he owns in the' world, beside the Forat River, has come to bear witness in the presence of history to the oppressed of history, to all of the condemned of this executioner who rules history.

He has come to bear witness with his son, Ali Akbar, as to how this executioner, Zahhak, has eaten the brains of youth throughout history.

Me has come to bear witness as to how a hero dies in a criminal regime and the regime of criminals by sacrificing himself. He has come to bear witness with his sister, Zainab, to a system which has ruled throughout history, that women should either select slavery and thus remain in harems or by choosing freedom, they should remain as martyrs and thereby lead the caravan of the captured.

He has come to bear witness with his small child, Ali Asghar, that the oppressive and criminal regime and the oppressive executioner does not even show mercy towards suckling children.

Husayn ('a) has come with his whole existence in order to bear witness in the criminal court of history on behalf of those who have been martyred and have died defenceless and in silence.

Now the court has ended with the martyrdom of Husayn ('a), with his sacrificing all of his dearest property and any possibility which he possessed. He has performed his great divine mission.

My dear friends! In the Shi'ism which we see where anyone who discusses the pure, aroused and awakened Shi'ite, prior to being defeated by the enemy, is sacrificed by friends, there exists an important and great teaching and message as well as great and divine values. He is a valuable resource which gives a living spirit to society, nations, race and history.

One of the most important life-giving sources which exists in the history of Shi'ites is martyrdom. As Jalal al-Ahmad has said, "We have forgotten the tradition of martyrdom and have changed into those who are only guarding at the cemeteries of martyrs. We are bearers of the black death."

Instead of being Ali, Husayn ('a) and Zainab's Shiites, that is, followers of martyrs, we have remained in ever¬lasting mourning.

KASHMIR OBSERVER
Tuesday 04 November 2014 | 10th Muharram 1436 Hijri

How intelligently we have altered the message of Husayn ('a) and his great, dear and everlasting friends. This message is addressed to all men.

What does it mean when Husayn ('a) who sees all of his dear ones are killed and there is no one in front of him except the hated and plundering enemy, cries out, "is there anyone who can help me?" Does he not know that there is no one who can help him? He has asked this question before the future history of man. This question is addressed to the future and to us. This question ex¬presses what Husayn ('a) expects from his lovers. With this question, he announced his invitation to all who respect martyrdom and martyrs.

But we diminished this invitation, his expectation of assistance, the message of Husayn ('a) who asks Shiites and his followers in every age and generation for help. Instead, we announce to the people that Husayn ('a) needs tears and weeping and has no other message. He has died and requires only lamentation and is not a martyr who bore witness, a person who requires followers at all times and in all places. Yes, they have told us to con¬tinue saying, "No."

Every revolution has two visages. The first visage is blood and the second is a message. Martyrdom means bearing witness. Those who themselves select the red-death in order to show their love of the truth which is being destroyed and which is the single weapon for jihad are the values which are diminishing.

It is to be present, alive, a witness not only in the presence of God but in the audience of the people and in every age, century, time and place. Those who bear humility in order to remain alive are silent and the dirty dead of history. But those who select their own death and with generosity have come with Husayn ('a) to be slaugh¬tered, while hundreds of religious arguments permit them to remain alive, they made no arguments and died. Are they alive or those who left Husayn ('a) and accepted abjection and inferiority in obeying Yazid in order to remain? Which ones are still alive? They are alive who do not consider life to be a moving body. They are alive who feel the existence of Husayn ('a) and who bear witness to his existence with all of their own being. They are alive who see those who remain humble in order to remain alive as being dead.

They show and martyrs show, teach and bear the message that being unable does not release your duty to stand against oppression and injustice. Martyrdom does not accept the argument that victory is only in conquering the enemy. A martyr is a person who when unable to conquer the enemy gains victory with his own death and if he cannot defeat the enemy, he disgraces him.

A martyr is the heart of history. In the same way that the heart gives blood to the body, a martyr gives it to history. In a society which is dying, in a society where its.. people are losing their faith, in a society which is involved with gradual death, in a society which accepts surrendering, in a society where responsibility is ignored, in a society where the belief of being human has been forgotten, in a society which ceases in its productivity, and movement, a martyr, as a heart, gives blood to the dry dead and motionless corpses of society.

The most important miracle of his martyrdom is that he gives a new faith to a generation. Thus a martyr is ever present and everlasting!

Who is absent? Husayn ('a) has taught us another more important lesson than his martyrdom and that is that he does not finish his Pilgrimage but puts his being martyred even before it. He does not finish the Pilgrimage which is a renewal of his ancestor's struggle - the struggle of his grandfather and his father. He does not finish the Pil¬grimage but chooses martyrdom. He does not finish the ceremony of the Pilgrimage in order to teach all of the pilgrims of history, in order to answer all of the prayers of history, addressing all of the faithful followers of -Abraham if there is no imamate or leadership, if no goals exist, if no Husayn ('a) exists but Yazid exists, circumambu¬lating around the House of God is equal to circumambu¬lating around a house of idols.

When Husayn ('a) interrupted his Pilgrimage ceremonies and left for Karbala, those who continued their circumam¬bulation in the absence of Imam Husayn ('a) are equivalent to those who circumambulate around the Green Palace of Mo'awiyyah because a martyr is one who is present. He is present in all areas of truth and falsehood, in all jihads between oppression and justice. He is present and the intention of his presence is to give this message to all men: if you are not present on the battlefield of truth and falsity, it makes no difference where you are. If you do not bear witness to the battle between truth and falsity during your age, it makes no difference what you are doing. Whether you be at prayer or you be drink¬ing it is the same thing.

Martyrdom bears witness to the permanent battlefield of history between the truth and falsity and absence? All of those who left Husayn ('a) alone and were not present and did not accompany him in martyrdom are all equal -whether they be those who left Husayn ('a) alone and went to Yazid and worked as his agents or whether-they be those who, in expectation of paradise, went to altars of prayer with security and peace and left Husayn ('a) alone, who in order to avoid the troubles of conflicts between truth and falsity, ran away to corners of the altars or houses only to pray to God or those who kept silent because they were frightened.

Where Husayn ('a) is present - and he is present in every century and in every age - anyone who does not stand beside him, whether they be believers or atheists, criminals or virtuous peoples - they are all equal.

According to a principle of Shi'ite ideology, the nature of each act depends upon imamate, leadership and governorship. Without it, everything is meaningless and we see that it is meaningless.

> **IF YOU ARE RELIGIOUS,** you have a responsibility to your religion. A liberated person also has a responsibility towards human liberty. Witness your time. Witness the conflict between the truth and falsehood of your age. Wherever our martyrs bear witness, they are aware and alive and always present. They are a symbol and bear witness to the truth and falsity, the destiny and fate of humanity."

Now, Husayn ('a) has announced his presence to all ages, against all generations, in all battles, in all jihads, upon all of the battlefields of the earth and of the age. He has died in Karbala in order to cause all ages and generations to arise.

And you and I - we must cry in our misery that we are not present. Every revolution has two visages: blood and a message. Husayn ('a) and his companions undertook the first mission of blood.

The second mission of martyrdom, the burden of bearing the message which is announced to the world is given to Zainab - a woman whose courage is something for all to learn from. The mission of Zainab is heavier and more difficult to bear than her brother's mission. Those who have the courage to select their own death have simply made a great choice, but the responsibility of those who remain is most difficult. Zainab has remained. The caravan of slaves follows behind her. The ranks of the enemy are in front of her. The announcement of her brother's mission rests solely upon her shoulders. She enters the town. She is coming from the battlefield. She has left behind a red garden of martyrdom and the per¬fume of the red flowers spreads from her skirts. She enters the criminal city, the capital of power, oppression and execution.

With peace, she victoriously announces to the powers and cruel people, the enslaved agents, executioners, the remnants of colonialization and dictatorship: "Thank you God for all the generosity and greatness which you gave to our family: the honour of prophecy and the honour of martyrdom!"

Zainab bears the responsibility of announcing the message of those who bore witness but are silent because she had remained and must now speak for the martyrs, whose tongues have been silenced by the executioners.

If blood has no message, it will remain unspoken in history. If blood does not extend its message to all genera¬tions, the executioner will imprison it in a certain time and age. If Zainab does not announce the message of Karbala to history, Karbala will remain silent and those who need such a message will fail to receive it. The message of those who speak with their blood will reach no one.

This is why the mission of Zainab is so heavy and difficult. The message of Zainab is for all human beings, to all of those who cry for the death of Husayn ('a), to all who incline their heads towards the threshold of Husayn ('a)'s faith, to all of those who believe as Husayn ('a) that 'life is nothing but faith and jihad'.

Zainab's message - "Any of you who are related to or committed to this family - anyone who is faithful to the mission of Muhammad - you must think and select - in every age, every generation, in whatever land you may bo., you must listen to the message of the martyrs of Karbala who said:

'Those can live well who can die well.'

"You who believe in the message of divine unity and the Qur'an as well as the way of Ali and his family and you who will come after us, the message of our family to humanity is the art of how to live well and how to die well.

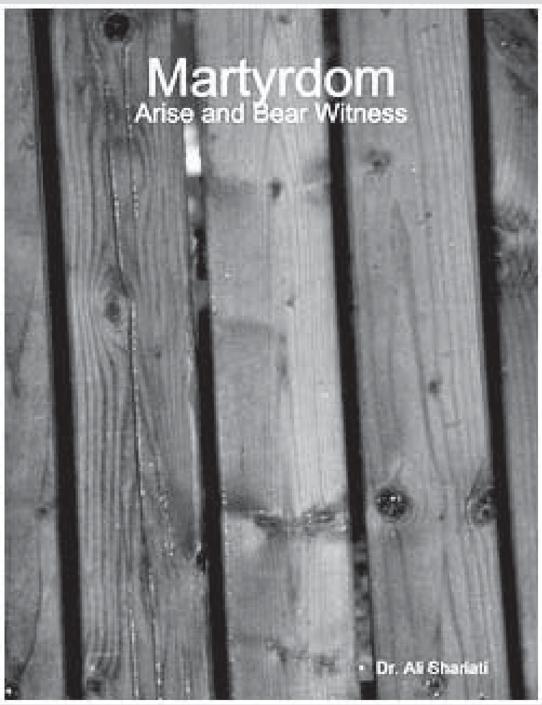
"If you are religious, you have a responsibility to your religion. A liberated person also has a responsibility towards human liberty. Witness your time. Witness the conflict between the truth and falsehood of your age. Wherever our martyrs bear witness, they are aware and alive and always present. They are a symbol and bear witness to the truth and falsity, the destiny and fate of humanity."

A martyr embraces all of these. Each revolution has two visages: blood and a message. Anyone who has chosen the responsibility of accepting truth, anyone who knows what a Shi'ite's responsibility means, anyone who under¬stands the responsibility of the freedom of humanity, must know that in the permanent battle of history -,everywhere and everyplace, all fields - are Karbala, all months are Muharram, all days are Ashura and thus one must choose: either blood or bearing the message, to be either Husayn ('a) or Zainab, to die like Husayn ('a) or remain like Zainab, if he does not want to be absent and always wants to have presence.

I sincerely apologize to the audience. Time has passed and there is no further opportunity. There is so much to be said. How can. one completely express the miracle of Husayn ('a) in one lecture and Zainab who com¬pleted it. What I want to say is a long story but in sum¬mary, the mission of Zainab after martyrdom is:

Those who died committed a Husaynic act.
Those who remain must perform a Zainabic act.
Otherwise, they are Yazids.

From the book
Martyrdom: Arise and Bear Witness
By • Dr. Ali Shariati



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